SPACE CAMP

Screenplay

by

Clifford and Ellen Green

and

Marshall Herskovitz

Based on a Screenplay by
Larry B. Williams, from a
Story by Patrick Bailey

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EXT. COUNTRY FIELD - DUSK

TWILIGHT. Its magic fills the screen. Trillions of STARS are dusted across the blue-black SKY. It's a romanticized sky. LIKE IN A CHILD'S MEMORY. Which is exactly what this is. IT'S 1962...

Staring up at the sky is a GIRL. About nine, she's on her back in a grassy field watching the stars. *Intensely.* Expectantly. As if something's about to happen. Suddenly--

A STREAK. A flash of light shoots across the sky. The GIRL bolts up. It's gorgeous -- but she sinks back in disappointment.

LITTLE ANDIE
...only a shootin' star...

Christ, this kid's hard to please. Across the field, the yellow glow of a HOUSE is as romanticized as the sky. We HEAR the porch door open but the GIRL never takes her eyes off the stars.

MOM (O.S.)
C'mon, Andie, everybody's watching on t.v..

ANDIE just keeps staring up.

MOM (CONT.- O.S.)
You can't see it if you don't come in.

ANDIE
Can too...
(O.S. the porch door CLOSES)
...What are ya, dumb?

MOM (O.S.)
I heard that Andie Wickman...

Unfazed, ANDIE stares confidently at the sky.

ANDIE
Can too see it.

Suddenly, another STREAK OF LIGHT across the heavens. But ANDIE sighs her disappointment.

ANDIE (CONT.)
Just another wisher.

But this one doesn't die. It keeps moving steadily across the stars. ANDIE'S EYES GROW WIDE... She scrambles to her knees...

The LIGHT PURE WHITE holds course. It's a magical sight, as full of wonder as the girl's face.
And suddenly --

FLASH.
It blinks. Just once. ANDIE'S jaw drops.

ANDIE (CONT.)
He winked at me...
(frozen in awe)
John Glenn winked at me...

She's seen the Grail. The Godhead. The Christ. And there's only one response

ANDIE (CONT.)
...I'm goin' up...

MOM'S VOICE breaks the starlit reverie.

MOM (O.S.)
You're not going anywhere but in the tub.

ANDIE stares up at the stars, testy with determination.

ANDIE
Am too.
(getting pissed)
I am too goin' up...

As we hold on her fierce, starlit face, an O.S. ROAR grows:

CUT TO:

EXT. MARSHALL SPACE FLIGHT CENTER - DAY

ROAR! As a T-38 zooms overhead WE HEAR:

ZACH (V.O.)
You're not going up, Andie...

CUT TO:

EXT. ADMINISTRATION BUILDING - DAY

In her NASA FLIGHT SUIT, ANDIE'S ALL GROWN UP, prettier -- and testier -- than ever. She's storming across the administration parking lot with ZACH BERGSTROM.

ZACH (CONT.)
You didn't make the roster, I'm sorry.

In his early forties, ZACH'S an ex-astronaut and can understand Andie's frustration. Up to a point.

ANDIE
They know I can fly the shuttle, Zach, why are they doing this?

ZACH
Because they're thinking about forty-seven other pilots who've logged twice your time, who're uglier than you, and have the clear biological superiority of being able to piss standing up.

ANDIE
(sighs)
And if I'd settled for Specialist -- like every other woman in the program--

ZACH
--you would've already been up...

ANDIE
--"you would've already been up..."

They've reached her beat-up old Porsche Speedster. Zach half-smiles, watching Andie slam the door as she gets in.

INSIDE THE CAR

She pops the clutch, pulling out of the lot.

ANDIE
Zach, would you fight for me? If it came down to it, would you go in there and tell them I can pilot the thing?
(no answer)
I mean it.

ZACH
(quietly)
I did already.

Andie tightens her grip on the wheel, gratitude mixing with a rising sense of panic that she'll never get into space.

ZACH
Andie, they haven't said no. I waited nine years.

Andie nods -- cold comfort.

EXT. MARSHALL SPACE CENTER - DAY

The Porsche is heading out of Marshall, but it doesn't have far to go. Just down the road they pass under a large sign: "United States SPACE CAMP, Huntsville, Alabama, est. 1982".

INSIDE THE CAR

ANDIE
So, when do our kids arrive?

Now Zach is grateful. The camp means a lot to him, as we'll see.

ZACH
You know you may enjoy working with the camp...

ANDIE
Space Camp... Well, I guess I have to do something... while I wait for 1997.

ROLL MAIN CREDITS OVER:
EXT. SPACE CAMP - DAY

The four hundred acres of SPACE CAMP lay spread before us. And it's total HIGH-TECH. From the low modular quad to the round research buildings to the towering Saturn Rockets, Space Camp looks like a college campus circa 2010...

But in the PARKING LOT it's pure 20th century. IT'S ARRIVAL DAY and cars fill the lot: parents trying to make sure their seventeen-year olds have everything, the seventeen-year olds trying to edge away from their parents as quickly as possible...

ANDIE AND ZACH

pull up and get out.

ZACH
(to Andie)
--and what it'll mean to the girls especially, having you around. When you see the spirit here, the skills these kids bring. I mean in terms of the Space Program -- yeah, these kids are the future.

ANDIE
(shakes her head)
Uh, uh, friend.
(points to herself)
First I go up, <u>then</u> they can be the future...

MAIN CREDITS END as a family pulls up in an old station wagon. Seventeen-year old KEVIN DONALDSON is the first out, followed by his parents and younger brother. Kevin is looking around enthusiastically--

KEVIN
This place is really scientific. I mean, dad, can you feel the science?

His father, a steel worker from Ohio, is not persuaded.

FATHER
I'm seeing a career here? Where's a career?

MOTHER
Frank, it's only the parking lot--

KEVIN
And an impressive parking lot...

MOTHER
For a scholarship, it's not so bad...

FATHER
The mill has a parking lot too. Only there he'd be earning money.

KEVIN
Dad, the future's not in the mill. The future is right here.

Zach has come up.

ZACH
(to Kevin's dad)
Hello, there, sir, I'm Zach Bergstrom, Director of Space Camp...
(ad lib intros)
And Kevin, you're right. The future <u>is</u> right here. Glad to have you with us.

And as we watch Kevin checking out the incoming FEMALE CAMPERS, and glean from his tone that nothing of what he said was sincere, we realize that Zach may yet change his feeling about having Kevin at Space Camp...

A twin-engine PLANE BUZZES overhead, circling for a landing...

CUT TO:

INT. THE PLANE - DAY

KATHRYN HAWLSEY is at the controls. She's also seventeen, is quite pretty, obviously intelligent, and too serious for her own good. Her FATHER sits next to her, her MOTHER behind.

FATHER
You're going to bring it in on a Northwest, start the turn about--

KATHRYN
Five hundred feet, there's a head wind.

Her father looks at the instruments, then at Kathryn.

FATHER
--*Six hundred feet. There's a* head wind.

Kathryn rolls her eyes, half-smiles.

CUT TO:

EXT. MARSHALL AIRSTRIP - DAY

We now see the side of the plane reads "HAWLSEY'S SKYWRITING, POMPANO BEACH" as DAD and MOM help KATHRYN unload her bags. Her mother notices the small amount of luggage.

MOTHER
Kathy, where are your clothes?

KATHRYN
There's a uniform, Mom.

MOTHER
In the evenings they wear uniforms, too? I thought we picked out all those clothes.

KATHRYN
In the evenings we'll be studying.

Her mother isn't sure, but nods anyway.

KATHRYN
Oh, Dad, don't forget -- I tightened the springs in the tail wheel.

DAD
What am I gonna do when you *run off to the Air Force Academy?*

MOM
If she decides to go...

KATHRYN
Mom, you know I'm gonna go and you know why I'm gonna go.

MOTHER
Dear, it's fine if you want to be a pilot, I just hope you--

KATHRYN
Mom, I don't want to be a pilot, I want to pilot the shuttle. I want to go in space. Isn't that why we're here?

MOTHER
Well, dear, it's a camp, too. I hope you'll try to, well, I hope you can find time to...

KATHRYN
(kisses her mother)
Yeah, Mom. I'll have lots of fun. I promise.
(kisses her father)
Bye, Dad.

She hugs her parents and heads for:

EXT. SPACE PARK - DAY

Where a large banner reads: "Welcome to Space Camp! Orientation 10:00 A.M." Beyond the banner is an exhibit of many of the space vehicles from NASA'a glory days.

The rockets look like nothing so much as the elegantly preserved remains of giant dinosaurs brooding over the landscape, dwarfing everything around them, causing normally arrogant human beings to feel puny and weak in their shadow.

KATHRYN stares at them in awe. She stops at an exhibit of the Moon landing, complete with realistic lunar landscape and Neil Armstrong planting the flag.

KEVIN (V.O.)
(doing the music)
It's MTV!

KATHRYN turns to find KEVIN standing next to her. Though his comment was fairly obnoxious, she's willing to give him the benefit of the doubt--

KATHRYN
(looking at the exhibit)
It's amazing to think they were actually up there...

KEVIN
I know. And with all the billions of dollars spent on the space program, why they have to cover their capsules in tin foil is totally beyond me...

Oh, well, she gave him a chance...

KEVIN
My theory is that the atmosphere on the moon, see, they found out is like a refrigerator--

He turns. KATHRYN'S not there any more.

CUT TO:

SPACEDOME THEATER - DAY

The 100 SPACE CAMPERS are seated in the Spacedome Theater -- a high-tech auditorium that looks like a planetarium sliced in half. ZACH'S at the podium in the middle of ORIENTATION...

ZACH
--so for the next three weeks you're going to train just the way NASA trains its astronauts -- and probably have the time of your life--

IN THE REAR OF THE THEATER

Kevin enters and looks around. He sees Kathryn and goes to some difficulty to sit next to her.

ZACH
--you'll see, we don't act like your teachers here, no crap about what you should do or how you should be. We need you. In the space business the future takes about five minutes to become ancient history. Five or ten years from now you'll be telling us what to do, you'll be solving problems we're kicking our brains in and can't solve now.

The kids in the audience are rapt, because it's obvious that Zach is telling the truth.

ZACH
How many in this room intend to go into space some day?

With not one moment's hesitation, virtually everyone raises his hand.

Kevin is one of the few who doesn't. He looks at Kathryn, her intent, dedicated look as she holds her arm up -- and her furtive glance around as she realizes her competition.

He finds himself glancing around as well, looking for a kindred spirit -- and finds one, a black guy named RUDY TYLER, with an imposing physique and quiet manner.

ZACH
You'll notice, then, why I didn't say "real" astronauts, because here at Space Camp we consider <u>you</u> real astronauts, or else we'd all be wasting our time.

Kevin notices that he and Kathryn have the same color arm bands. Kathryn notices it, too. He smiles.

KEVIN
Hi. I think we're on the same crew...

KATHRYN
Shhh...

ZACH
--Those arm bands you received tell you which crew you'll be on. You'll be spending sixteen hours a day with each other. You'll eat, breathe, and work as a crew--

Hearing those words and looking at Kathryn, for the first time Kevin begins to warm up to the place.

ZACH
You'll learn the basics of flying the shuttle, weightlessness, tracking -- but most of all you'll learn how to work together. Because you'll be in competition with

MORE

ZACH (CONT)
other crews. And you'll be scored not only on how well you compete but on how well you work together. Because a crew that doesn't get along -- ain't no crew...

KEVIN grins at KATHRYN; she grits her teeth.

ZACH (CONT.)
Now are there any questions before we go into the details?

KEVIN jumps up, hand raised.

KEVIN
I know we're going to be training as astronauts, and I think that's really important, because there's no point fooling around. So I guess really the crews should sleep together as well...

The kids crack up, so does Zach. Kathryn closes her eyes.

CUT TO:

INT. SPACE MUSEUM - DAY

The KIDS are spilling out of the theater, into a museum of many of the capsules and artifacts making up NASA history.

KEVIN
(following Kathryn)
I'm sorry -- it was a joke. Seriously. Please--

She stops and looks at him.

KEVIN
I'm sorry if I managed to totally offend you in the *first seven minutes* of our relationship.

KATHRYN
What relationship?

KEVIN
The relationship we're going to have, working together on the same team.

He is smiling warmly, extending his hand. Zach's words are still fresh in her ear. She extends her own.

KATHRYN
Kathryn Hawlsey.

He smiles like a true gentleman, tips an imaginary hat.

KEVIN
Kevin Donaldson.

KATHRYN
Hold up your end, Donaldson.
Or you're dead meat.

Smiling herself, she walks away. Nearby:

A TWELVE-YEAR OLD

is poking around a display of THREE SPACE PROBES where a TECHNICIAN'S working. He eyes the Viking, the Mariner and the SMALLER PROBE that looks somewhat like a convoluted egg. The sign says "DO NOT TOUCH" and so he touches it and --

WHACK.
It slaps his hand away. IT'S GOT AN ARM. It turns -- IT'S GOT A HEAD. And a temper -- it emits a low, electronic GROWL at the boy -- who's name is MAX. He inches back.

TECH.
(not looking)
Jinx, I need you to hold this for me.

JINX rolls out of the display he was never really part of and extends an arm to help the TECHNICIAN.

MAX
Voice recognition...? Pattern analysis...?
(the TECHNICIAN eyes him)
There's a fifth generation computer in that thing, which hasn't been invented yet, so how come he has it?

TECHNICIAN
Why do you want to know?

MAX
I'm KGB, okay? Go ahead and shoot me.

TECHNICIAN
(smiles)
He's a prototype, we built him for the space station. Say hello, Jinx.

JINX
(synthesized voice)
Hello. My name is Jinx. I'm helping Steve today.

MAX
Oh, man... When's he going up?

TECHNICIAN
He's not. We blew it on his shielding, he'd lose his chips in about two hours. I'm afraid poor old Jinx is the world's only 27 million dollar handyman.

MAX watches the robot maneuver around the space craft. It was clearly designed for a weightless environment and has little concern for "up" and "down", being just as content to hang sideways off a tail support as stand on the floor.

And in that hanging there's an unmistakable droop, a sadness, at being thusly -- with all Jinx's spaceward potential -- misused.

CUT TO:

INT. THE TRAINING CENTER - DAY

Where the kids have changed into the RED FLIGHT SUITS we'll see them in for most of their time at camp. Andie is introducing herself to the blue team.

ANDIE
--and I'm Andie Wickman, I'll be your team leader.

KATHRYN
You're an astronaut -- aren't you? First female pilot?

ANDIE
Hope to be. How'd you know that?

KATHRYN
(suddenly embarrassed)
I'm...in the Young Astronauts program... Hi, Kathryn Hawlsey.

ANDIE
(shakes her hand)
Oh, Kathryn, I remember your application. You're something of a pilot yourself...

Kathryn nods. Andie turns to Rudy.

RUDY
Hello, ma'am. Rudy Tyler.

ANDIE
Hello, Rudy, how are you? It says here you're quite an athlete.
(Rudy shrugs)
All State in basketball...

RUDY
We had a good team.

ANDIE
Is there any particular interest that brought you here?

Rudy seems thrown by the question.

RUDY
Interest? I don't know, I...I'm just checking out the place...to see, you know...

ANDIE
It's okay, Rudy, we'll make you a Payload Specialist, that way you can range about.

She moves on to the next kid: TISH AMBROSE. Her magenta hair somehow just works with the uniform, but her ankle length Peter Pan boots... She has the look of a person without the smarts to get through a single day, a countenance so spacy she makes the shuttle seem earthbound. So it's perfectly understandable that her guidance counselor asked for a recheck when her SAT scores came back. But more about that later.

She's been polite enough to pull her Walkman earphones down around her neck: we can HEAR "Material Girl" droning out of them. Her gum makes a cracking noise in her mouth as Andie approaches.

ANDIE
And you are...?

TISH
Hi, I'm Tish Ambrose.

ANDIE
Spit it out, Tish.

TISH
(louder)
TISH AMBROSE.

ANDIE
...Tish. The gum.

Tish laughs, embarrassed, and takes out the gum.

TISH
Sorry, I thought, you know, like...

ANDIE
I know... We've found that gum has certain disadvantages in space, so we try to break the habit here on earth. You have a particular interest you'd like to follow up while you're here, Tish?

TISH
Well, you know like I did this internship at J.P.L. in radio astronomy, listening to radio waves from space? It was so neat, we sat there and waited for signs of intelligence?

ANDIE
(looks at her)
...I know the feeling. Okay, Mission Specialist, Ascent. You can handle communications.

She moves onto the third kid, but we don't see him at first because he's so short. He's the kid from the robot, MAX ENGEL, twelve years old.

ANDIE
You're...Max?

MAX
Forget it, you can't kick me out.

ANDIE
Max, how old are you?

MAX
What is this, age discrimination now?

ANDIE
You do not look sixteen years old.

MAX
So I lied. Execute me. Go ahead, 20,000 volts, put me in a depressure chamber so I splatter all over your walls.

ANDIE
(points at him)
I'm talking to Zach about you.
(sighs)
All right, what do you want to do while you're here?

MAX
High speed crisis vehicle maneuvering.

ANDIE
(taken aback)
Where did you learn about that?

MAX
Zaxxon. I came in fifth in the National Video Game finals.

Andie closes her eyes and moves on, then points back at Max.

ANDIE
Mission Specialist. You're not getting near the stick on this vehicle.
(to Kevin and Kathryn)
Well, that leaves Pilot and Commander. I take it you're... Kevin.

KEVIN
Ma'am, last time I checked.

ANDIE
Welcome, Kevin, I hope you enjoy yourself here. Which of you wants to be Commander?
(turns to others)
That goes for anyone else who's unhappy with his assignment -- except for you, Max.

No one speaks up, though Kathryn obviously wants to.

ANDIE
Kevin? You look like you handle responsibility pretty well.

She's hit the nail on the head: Kevin can't stand having people depend on him; he feels duty-bound to disappoint them.

KEVIN
I was hoping for something maybe a little bit bigger, like Mission Sovereign, or Regent, or something like that?
(Kathryn smirks)
What?

KATHRYN
I didn't say anything...

KEVIN
You can't see me as mission commander?

KATHRYN
(laughs)
No! Do you know Advanced Calculus, do you know Non-Euclidian Geometry?

KEVIN
Like brothers.

KATHRYN
Then I guess you definitely know how to boot up a CX-7 Delta computer?!

KEVIN
In my sleep.

KATHRYN
Too bad there's no such thing as a CX-7 Delta computer--!

ANDIE
Okay, enough.

KATHRYN
He doesn't know the first thing about the Shuttle...

ANDIE
Quiet. How do you know you do either?
(Kathryn looks at her)
Kathryn, tell me why you want

to be commander.

KATHRYN
(thrown)
Because I can do the job.

ANDIE
Is that it, or would you like to see yourself in the job?

KATHRYN
Because I can do the job.

Andie and Kathryn look at each other for a moment. In an odd way, their dreams are too similar for them to get along. They both feel threatened.

ANDIE
I know you can, and you probably will -- but for the moment I think we'll see how Kevin does at it...

KATHRYN
That's not fair!
(on Andie's look)
He's not qualified!

KEVIN
Go on, give it to her. I don't care anyway.

ANDIE smiles victoriously:

ANDIE
But now that you re Shuttle Commander, you're gonna have to start to. Aren't you?

All of a sudden KEVIN'S not sure he likes this.

ANDIE (CONT.)
And I'm making you Pilot--

KATHRYN
You can't!

ANDIE
Pilot. Because I'm not sure how well you take orders. But you'll learn.
(to the CREW)
We're all here to learn, right?

CUT TO:

A LOW ANGLE OF THE SHUTTLE.
It's a majestic sight. And an awesome one. Perched on its gargantuan external tank, it rises eighteen stories into the sky...

ANDIE
Atlantis, the newest shuttle. We'll be doing a Flight Readiness Firing in a couple weeks -- and you kids are gonna get to be in it.....

Dwarfed even at a hundred yards away, the KIDS stare up in wonder, visitor's passes on.

TISH
While they fire what?

ANDIE
The main engines, Tish. But don't worry, without the boosters it's not going anywhere...

Max is standing next to Kevin.

MAX
Wouldn't you like to take on the Empire in one of those?

As Kevin turns to him in confusion (Empire?), Max goes into an incredibly realistic litany of sound effects from Star Wars. It sounds like the battle at the Death Star.

MAX
You know they have gun ports, don't you? They hide 'em from the general public. Particle Beam. Awesome -- wwhhammppp! -- you got a hole this big -- I could see right through you.

Kevin edges away.

CUT TO:

A MOCK-UP OF THE SHUTTLE NOSE. It sits on a hydraulic lifter in the middle of the Space Camp TRAINING CENTER.

ANDIE (V.O.)
And this is our Shuttle Simulator...

ANDIE and the KIDS are INSIDE THE SIMULATOR. KATHRYN and KEVIN are sitting at the main controls.

ANDIE
The instrument panel is made from actual schematics. Every switch, every readout on the Discovery, is also right here. And most of those switches do things, so--

She swats Tish's hand away from the Communications Board.

ANDIE
--don't touch anything until you're told.

KATHRYN
I presume this is a standard airplane type stick.

ANDIE
Not quite. Backwards and forwards, yes. Side to side, yes. Put your hand on it.
(Kathryn does)
Now twist.

As Kathryn twists the stick, the entire cockpit starts to rotate left. The kids are taken totally by surprise, and yell as they reach for handholds.

Kathryn twists the stick back to forward.

ANDIE
I told you, most things in here do something. What you initiated there was the yaw control. As you'll learn, it's critical for reentry.

Andie heads out of the cockpit, the kids following -- except for Kevin. He sits in the pilot's seat a moment longer, relaxing as if on a throne.

He leans back, hands behind his head, picks up his feet -- this astronaut business really isn't so bad... Idly, he starts tapping his foot against the stick and finally, concurrent with a yawn, his foot pushes the stick all the way left--

The entire cabin rolls over on its side, dumping Kevin out of his chair.

KEVIN
HEY!!

Since the cabin rolled, the side door is now on the bottom. Andie pokes her head up through it.

The look of terror on Kevin's face is enough satisfaction: she smiles a righteous smile and leaves him to extricate himself.

CUT TO:

INT. GIRLS BUNK - NIGHT

Most of the 20 GIRLS are still unpacking. On her top bunk KATHRYN'S typing away; below her TISH lays in bed wearing men's underwear and listening to her Walkman.

TISH
"...yes he's fine, and he's mine--" I don't know, the guy like, did you see the guy in Red Team, his eyes are so close together, but he's kind of cute anyway? He's a babe, that makes four, but really, most of them are just total nerds.

KATHRYN
(trying to write)
Tish...

TISH
I don't know, you know Kevin's not too bad.

KATHRYN
Spare me...

TISH
You don't like him 'cause Andie made him Commander.

KATHRYN
I don't like him because he's totally unserious, and anyway I never said I didn't like him.

TISH
You just said you didn't like him.

Kathryn rolls her eyes -- then changes the subject, grimacing.

KATHRYN
How am I supposed to explain why I want to go in space?

TISH
I said I wanted to contact life forms that exist on chemicals other than carbon and oxygen.

KATHRYN
Just drop in on my high school...
(leans back)
I don't know... I was sitting in that simulator thinking, if this were the real thing -- all I'd have to do is take my left hand and hit three switches and there's no way they could stop us.

TISH
Your right hand.

KATHRYN
What?

TISH
Your right hand. Main engines and boosters are in the right panel, like under the life support pod.

KATHRYN
How do you know that?

TISH
I saw it.

KATHRYN
What today -- and now you remember it?

TISH
Oh, yeah, I remember everything I see. It's a real pain sometimes, like your mind gets totally cluttered. And I have enough trouble thinking as it is...

KATHRYN
(thinks about it)
Photographic memory... That must have come in real handy on your SAT's. What'd you get?

TISH
800's.

On Kathryn's look,

CUT TO:

THE BOYS' BUNK - NIGHT

where an impromptu competition is going on: Kevin against Rudy, free-throwing tennis balls into a wastebasket twenty feet away. Rudy steps back, makes a fall-away jumper.

KEVIN
What am I playing this guy for, he should be in the pros...
(KIDS are laughing)
Tyler, what are you doing here, you could buy NASA with the money you'll make in the NBA....

RUDY
(makes a sky-hook)
Yeah, and if I don't make the NBA?

KEVIN
With that shot?

RUDY
Man, in my neighborhood I've seen six guys better than me. You don't make the pros just 'cause you get scouted.
(KEVIN is skeptical)
I hear what you say in my school, "How come you're takin' physics, man, you don't need physics, you'll get your scholarship..." They don't ask me if I like physics...

He fakes around KEVIN, makes a lay-up. KEVIN brings it in.

KEVIN
You like physics...?

RUDY easily steals the ball and lays in another one.

RUDY
Yeah. But ask me if I can do it...

He flips the ball to KEVIN and heads back toward his bed.

KEVIN
Hey, don't quit me now, just when I have no chance of winning--

RUDY
Aren't you gonna write this essay?

KEVIN
What's to write? I wrote it already.

He gives Rudy the paper.

RUDY
(reads)
"Why I Want To Go Into Space, by Kevin Donaldson. I have no interest in going into space, but I don't mind if other people do." That's your essay?

KEVIN
It's the truth.

RUDY
(amused)
What the hell are you doing here?

KEVIN
Beats working, don't it? Come on, we'll get you another essay to steal from. Where's the kid?

Kevin reaches over and picks up Max's essay. Max is nowhere in sight.

RUDY
I don't want to steal anybody's essay, I want to figure out--

But Kevin, eyes wide, stops him and hands over the paper. Rudy looks at it.

RUDY
(reading)
"Why I Really Want to Go in Space, by Max Engel..."

Kevin moves over to the bathroom door.

RUDY
"The need for Special Weapons Teams in space will soon be apparent..."

KEVIN
Max, you okay in there, you get beamed up or something?

Kevin is suddenly concerned. He opens the bathroom door.

IN THE BATHROOM

are several stalls. One of them is closed.

KEVIN
Max, you okay, what's up, guy?
(no answer)
Max, what's up?

A synthesized VOICE answers him.

JINX (V.O.)
"Up -- adverb meaning at some distance above the earth."

Totally confused, Kevin bounds over to the stall and yanks it open. His jaw drops.

KEVIN
Holy shit...

Jinx's suction-cup feet are attached to the side of the stall, causing him to project out at a totally odd angle. MAX is vainly trying to cover his speaker.

JINX
Solid waste on board the space station is handled in one of two ways. First, unsterilized--

MAX
Jinx, cancel--

Jinx stops. Other guys have entered the bathroom; they're all standing there, mouths gaping open, staring.

RUDY
Where did it come from?

MAX
He has the run of the place, he's a prototype.

KEVIN
How much trouble are you in for having it?

MAX
None. They make him do junk stuff because he can't go in space. I liberated him.

Kevin and Rudy look at each other.

KEVIN
Come here, Jinx...

Everytime JINX is given a command, the "COMMAND LIGHT" atop his head flashes on. He "walks" down the side of the stall, toward Kevin.

MAX
No, he's mine!

KEVIN
Hurry up, Jinx. Shake a leg.

And JINX stops -- SHAKING one of his aluminum limbs.

KEVIN (CONT.)
Oh, now he's having convulsions--

MAX
He's just shaking his leg, jerkoff, like you told him to.

RUDY
You mean it takes everything as a literal command?

MAX
What am I, an expert? Jinx back here--

JINX heads back toward MAX.

KEVIN
Yo, Jinx, this way, fella'--

MAX
Jinx, come back here!

Old JINX seems a little confused. All the BOYS start yelling.

BOY #2
Here, Jinx, up the wall!

BOY #3
Jinx, swing on the door!

JINX'S head is literally spinning from the chorus of commands.

MAX
Leave him alone! He's mine!

JINX "walks" onto the stall door and the boys start to swing it. Until--

CRASH!
Jinx lies inert on the floor. "Down" caught up to him after all. There's a frozen panic.

KEVIN
Uh, Max, it was nice not being in this bathroom and so not being able to see whatever... clearly isn't in this bathroom, and the next time we come in this bathroom, we certainly hope there won't be anything.... that isn't... in here now(?)

RUDY
Really...liked your essay, Max.

The guys float out of the bathroom. MAX is left alone with the "lifeless" JINX....

LATER--

It's lights out and everyone's asleep -- except MAX. There's a flashlight glow from under the blanket he's tented over two chairs. His tools scattered, he's working on JINX'S leg.

MAX
That should do it. I fixed your socket cable...

He tests it and continues talking as if the robot were alive. Because to MAX, it is.

MAX (CONT.)
...And with the software change, they won't be able to pick on you anymore.

JINX
Ready for new command input.

MAX
Okay. It's very simple. Control/delete/new phrase: "Jinx responds only commands from Max", Control/C.

JINX
Copy con: "Jinx responds only commands from Max".

MAX
Correct. Now we can be friends...

JINX'S COMMAND LIGHT FLASHES.

JINX
Friends, Max.

FADE OUT.

A MUSIC CUE -- "Walkin' to New Orleans" -- which leads into:

TRAINING MONTAGE--

In the TRAINING CENTER: Kevin and Rudy in Moonwalkers, spring-loaded contraptions that simulate the low-gravity of the Moon. They jump ten feet in the air, float past each other, and high-five...

In the MISSION-CONTROL MOCK-UP: We MOVE behind kids at consoles with monitors. ANDIE walks in front of the monitors, watching the kids. Kevin's monitor has been switched to "Days of Our Lives". ANDIE doesn't notice.

In the TRAINING CENTER: TISH is being strapped into a Zero-G chair, in which any movement in any direction just keeps going in that direction... She pushes off gently, but not gently enough, since she TAKES OFF LIKE A BULLET and, while everyone else cringes, CRASHES into a wall.

MAX is the only one laughing. So it's no surprise to see:

MAX, in the same chair, careening across the room -- with the same results.

CUT TO:

THE TRAINING CENTER - AGAIN

This time we're in a different area, where Kathryn is about to go on the Multi-Axis Trainer, an innocent-enough looking object consisting of a nice, comfortable seat suspended within three large, concentric rings...

ANDIE
...they realized that the capsule might start tumbling once it reentered the atmosphere -- and the astronaut would have only a few seconds to stabilize or be burned up. So they invented this little baby to practice on. Are you in?
(Kathryn nods)
All right, you'll find yourself in some odd...positions. Just use the controls to get yourself back to right side up. Okay?

KATHRYN
Can't be any worse than flying a loop-the-loop...

ANDIE
Right. Not much worse at any rate...

Andie throws the switch. No worse than a loop-the-loop? Try riding a paint can through one of those mixing machines, try being a spinning frizzbee inside a rolling beach ball that somehow got caught on the Great White Knuckler at Knott's Berry Farm.

Kathryn is going around in so many different directions, she can no longer tell which way is up, let alone get there.

ANDIE
Grab your stick, with your right hand, grab your stick!

No answer. This thing is so horrible that even bystanders are considering heading for the toilets...

ANDIE
Okay, now pull the stick down--

KATHRYN
I'm--

ANDIE
Come on, if you want to be an astronaut you're gonna have to do this. Pull the stick, Kathryn!

Finally Andie turns the torture device off.

The kids gather around Kathryn as the seat slowly spins to a stop. After a few moments it's clear that she's dazed, but okay.

KATHRYN
...I want to go again.

ANDIE
If you didn't get it then, you're not going to get it now.

KATHRYN
Please, this is really important to me. I think I can get it.

An odd tension has come about between Andie and Kathryn, as if Andie had an investment in Kathryn doing well on the machine, and is disappointed in her that she didn't.

They look at each other.

ANDIE
Ten minutes. You can catch up to us.

She leads the group away. Except for Kevin, who stays.

KATHRYN
Enjoying the circus, "Commander"?

KEVIN
It's okay, you can call me "Sir"...

She ignores him, rebuckling her harness.

KEVIN (CONT.)
Why don't you ease up a little?

KATHRYN
I don't believe in easing up. You don't get anywhere if you ease up.

KEVIN
(serious)
Ever think that maybe you're already there...?

She looks at him, trying to figure him out.

KATHRYN
What do you want?

KEVIN
If you're going to practice, somebody has to turn on the machine...

KATHRYN
(warms a little)
Sure you don't want to try it?

KEVIN
Not in several million years.

Kathryn smiles and nods for Kevin to hit the switch. The horrendous machine starts again.

It's clear that Kathryn is doing better this time -- she almost gets right side up at one point -- but she's still not getting it. Kevin watches closely while the spinning continues.

KEVIN
You're missing the left, try hitting the left more--
(she seems to do better)
That's it, come on, you got it!

But she doesn't. Finally:

KATHRYN
(can barely speak)
Turn it off--

Kevin does. When the spinning stops, Kathryn is fighting off tears -- unsuccessfully. Kevin kneels down next to her.

KEVIN
Are you okay?
(she manages a nod)
Come on...let me get you out of this.

KATHRYN
(shakes her head)
Give me a couple...minutes. Go ahead...I'll catch up.

KEVIN
I don't think I should...

KATHRYN
I need to be by myself. Please.

Reluctantly, he goes.

Kathryn looks up and sees Andie across the large room, showing the kids a Manned Maneuvering Unit. For a moment, Andie returns the look, then turns away.

Kathryn puts her head down and surrenders to the tears.

CUT TO:

OUTSIDE THE BOYS' BUNK - NIGHT

Kevin is standing nervously next to Max and Jinx.

KEVIN
All right, you're sure he can do this?

MAX
No.

KEVIN
Because this is gonna be my only chance, you understand that, Max?

MAX
Big deal...

KEVIN
Years from now, eons from now, when you experience puberty... your body wracked by urges you can't understand or control, then -- you will not be saying, "Big Deal."
(Max is unimpressed)
Go ahead, tell him what to do.

MAX
Jinx. For tonight, do what Kevin wants. Okay? Max wants you to do what Kevin wants.

JINX
Hello, my name is Jinx. Tonight I'm helping Kevin.

Kevin and Max look at each other -- and nod.

CUT TO:

EXT. MARSHALL SPACE CENTER - NIGHT

Kevin and Kathryn are walking -- Jinx is nowhere in sight.

KATHRYN
Where are you taking me?

KEVIN
Relax. They said the whole space center is open to us.

KATHRYN
In the middle of the night?

Kevin gives her a look and keeps walking. She watches him.

KATHRYN
What is it with you, Kevin, really? One day you're a total jerk, and the next day...
(not sure what to say)
...you're only half a jerk.

He looks wounded.

KEVIN
Gee, you're so nice...

KATHRYN
I'm sorry, it's just...I don't know what to make of you.

KEVIN
So don't make anything of me...
(looks at her intently)
Just...accept me the way I am.

CUT TO:

A LARGE HANGAR-LIKE BUILDING - NIGHT

Jinx is at the door, using one of his arms to interface with an alarm panel. Several tones and clicks are heard, then the door opens.

JINX
The door is now open. You're welcome.

Jinx waits. A few moments later, Kevin and Kathryn appear.

KEVIN
Jinx, what do you say, fancy meeting you here...

JINX
The door is now open. You're welcome.

Kathryn is staring in amazement.

KATHRYN
What is that?

KEVIN
Haven't you seen Max's friend? He's some kind of prototype they keep around.

JINX
Hello, my name is Jinx. I was designed for use on space station Daedulus. I utilize fifth generation mechanics known as--

KEVIN
Jinx. Be cool.

A jet of steam is emitted from Jinx's cooling circuits.

KEVIN
(to Kathryn)
Come on, I want to show you...

They head inside.

INSIDE THE HANGAR

Kathryn's mouth opens in surprise.

KATHRYN
Oh, my God.....

She's staring at the Space Shuttle Atlantis, somehow the more imposing for being inside this huge building, lying on its belly.

KATHRYN
How did you know it was here?

KEVIN
I heard Andie talking about the Flight Firing or whatever it is.

She walks toward it reverently.

KATHRYN
It's so beautiful.... Isn't it beautiful? Look at it.

It looms above them, half-hidden in the darkness of the building.

KATHRYN
To think that this very thing is gonna be up in space....

Kevin walks forward, puts his arm around her.

KEVIN
I thought you might like to see it, up close and personal...

KATHRYN
I wish everybody could see this, I really do.

KEVIN
Yeah, I wish everybody could see it, too.

Behind them, one of Jinx's arms raises up. We SEE a LENS CAP move out of position at the end of his arm, SEE A VIDEO LENS COME INTO VIEW, and HEAR the whir of an auto-focus motor.

KATHRYN is looking at KEVIN.

KATHRYN
Thank you... You really, this was very...sweet.

They are moving closer.

KEVIN
You're welcome....

They kiss.

CUT TO:

THE NEXT DAY - THE SHUTTLE SIMULATOR

ANDIE is standing in the cockpit behind KEVIN and KATHRYN.

ANDIE
Okay, since everybody's in such a good mood, let's get started. Landing procedure. Let's get the playback-- You'll see the landing strip coming up at you...

She is pointing to the video screens in front of the simulator's windows. We SEE a videotape beginning. Only it ain't no landing strip...

IT'S KEVIN AND KATHRYN -- in the SHUTTLE HANGAR!

KATHRYN
(on the tape)
Thank you... You really, this was very...sweet.

KEVIN
You're welcome...

As they start to kiss, WE SEE that the SAME TAPE is also PLAYING IN:

MISSION CONTROL!
Banks of MONITORS show the same thing: KEVIN kissing a terribly willing KATHRYN....

IN THE SIMULATOR

KATHRYN, in the flesh, is turning various shades of red and purple as the laughter pours in from the other room. Even KEVIN is transfixed with shock, a shock compounded by the blood-curdling scream that slowly begins to erupt from Kathryn's throat.

KEVIN
(totally at a loss)
....Wh...Where...did...that come from?

KATHRYN is standing up, pushing herself out of the pilot's seat, turning to Kevin.

KATHRYN
You...son...of...a...BITCH!

And then she's gone.

CUT TO:

EXT. BOYS BUNK - DUSK

Outside the door, RUDY'S struggling to hold a squirming MAX...

MAX
It wasn't his fault!

A livid KEVIN comes out, slamming the door behind him.

KEVIN
Where is that damn thing?!
(MAX won't answer)
I'll find it myself!

As KEVIN storms off, MAX runs inside...

CUT TO:

INT. BOYS BUNK - DUSK

MAX confronts what used to be his bunk -- it's totally trashed, all his belongings strewn around the dorm.

MAX
Look at my stuff!

He kicks his TRUNK --

MAX (CONT.)
It's all your fault!

He opens it and a hidden JINX pops out.

MAX (CONT.)
Why do you have to take everything so literally?
(starts picking things up)
Jerks... They should all be zapped.

JINX'S COMMAND LIGHT flashes. TWO ELECTRODES pop out of his arms as he starts off.

MAX (CONT.)
Where're you going?

JINX
To zap them.

MAX
There you go again! I didn't mean it like that. I meant I wanted them to be zapped.

The ELECTRODES pop out again, sizzling.

MAX (CONT.)
Stop it! You can't take everything so literally. You're just supposed to do what I mean I want. What I really want.
(beat)
You understand?

JINX
Jinx does what Max really wants.

MAX
And I really want you to clean up this...mess.

MAX kicks his upturned trunk.

KEVIN (O.S.)
I knew he was here!

KEVIN'S in the doorway -- with a BASEBALL BAT. He slowly starts toward JINX.

KEVIN (CONT.)
Outta my way, Klingon...

MAX
Stop it! I'm getting Andie!

MAX runs screaming out of the bunk. KEVIN closes in on the robot--

JINX
Hello, my name is Jinx. I'm helping Max today.

--But he doesn't have the heart to bash it. Instead, he flops down on his bed.

JINX starts picking up Max's things.

KEVIN
Get lost, Jinx.

JINX
Max really wants me to clean up.

KEVIN
(grabbing for something to throw at JINX)
I don't care what Max wants! Just--

Something catches KEVIN'S eye. He shoves a PIECE OF PAPER at JINX.

KEVIN (CONT.)
Here, he wants this. Go do it.

JINX scans the paper and -- HIS COMMAND LIGHT FLASHES.

JINX
If Max really wants it.

KEVIN looks back at the paper. WE NOW SEE it's Max's essay --

"WHY I REALLY WANT TO GO INTO SPACE"

KEVIN
Yeah, see Max can't be a regular twerp who rides his bicycle and smokes dope. So do him a favor, Jinx: blast him off somewhere, send Max into space. Isn't that where everybody around here wants to go?

He lies back down on the bed, as JINX noiselessly rolls out of the room.

CUT TO:

INT. SECURITY CHECKPOINT - NASA COMPUTER BLDG. - NIGHT

The hallway checkpoint sign reads: "RESTRICTED". TWO armed GUARDS are scrutinizing the credentials of a NASA WORKER. As JINX STROLLS UP, they don't blink an eye.

GUARD #1
Hi, Jinx.

And JINX ambles right past the checkpoint and down the hall...

CUT TO:

INT. COMPUTER ROOM - NIGHT

JINX'S "NASA"-emblazoned arm is patched into the NASA COMPUTER TERMINAL. JINX speaks his lines as we read the conversation on the monitor.

VDT: Enter Authorization Code.

JINX: M3717ACB428.

VDT: Good morning, Jinx. How can NASA help you this morning?

JINX: How do I send Max into space?

VDT: *Please Wait* (pause) Sorry, no MAX currently in astronaut program.

JINX: He is now.

CUT TO:

AN INDOOR SWIMMING POOL - DAY

As KEVIN and RUDY, in swim trunks, head out of the dressing room. ANDIE and MAX are waiting for them. Other TEAMS are already in the pool.

ANDIE
Okay, get into the Neutral Buoyancy suits and we'll get started. Where are the girls?

She turns to look just as KATHRYN appears, walking diffidently out of the girls' dressing room. KATHRYN'S much more comfortable being seen in a uniform...

And KEVIN'S STARE isn't helping matters.

KEVIN
(trying to make amends)
Kathryn, I just want you to know that--

KATHRYN
Up yours. Where are the suits?

As ANDIE points, KEVIN and RUDY share a look over Kathryn's intransigence. But then RUDY is distracted -- he taps KEVIN on the arm:

The whistles from the other GUYS begin immediately, as soon as TISH emerges from the dressing room. She has an amazing body, all the more amazing for having been hidden so well in the uniform. And TISH doesn't mind the looks at all...

KATHRYN watches TISH walk past her, watches the reaction Tish is getting, and -- though she'd deny it even under torture -- feels more than a pang of regret that she can't get the same reaction herself...

A BIT LATER--

They're all suited up and in the pool, their suits connected to the surface by umbilical cords bringing air and communications.

AT THE BOTTOM OF THE TANK

is a mock-up of space station under construction, "DAEDULUS" written on its side. The kids are attaching poles that will create a structural skeleton.

ANDIE (V.O.)
...and don't expect things to float or sink -- you're neutrally buoyant, everything will stay pretty much where you put it. Like in space.

Working side by side, KEVIN and KATHRYN are "ignoring" each other. KEVIN carries a pole past her with an "accidental" bump.

KEVIN
Excuse me.

It's tough but she holds her tongue. He comes back with a rachet and floats up to a solar panel -- stepping on her helmet.

KATHRYN
Hey!

KEVIN
Excuse me.

KATHRYN
You know the Red Team's killing us, I hope you're aware of that...

TISH
Well if you'd cool your jets...
(to RUDY)
Rudy, what goes up next?

RUDY'S squinting at a plasticized DIAGRAM.

RUDY
37A.
(unsure)
Or is it B?

TISH
Rudy...

KATHRYN
I'm sure it's B.

KEVIN
Then it must be A.

KATHRYN
(fed-up)
Hey, wimp, I've put up six and you can't even do one!

KEVIN
Wimp? You want me to cut your air hose?

ANDIE'S VOICE fills their helmets.

ANDIE (V.O.)
I'll cut all your hoses...

ANDIE, headset on, is watching from TOPSIDE.

ANDIE
The real space station is going up faster than yours.
(exasperated)
What a team...

Chin in hands, MAX sits moping on the stairs.

MAX
It'd be done if you'da let me in there.

ANDIE
I told you, Max--

MAX
Yeah..."There aren't any suits small enough..."

Suddenly, JINX comes scurrying up behind him. The ROBOT looks from MAX to the tank and --

SPLASH!
He pushes MAX in with a word of advice --

JINX
Practice, practice...

And he scoots on...

CUT TO:

STARS. THOUSANDS OF THEM. Dusted across the blue-black sky. Blinking on and off like tiny bulbs.

ZACH (V.O.)
Head for Alpha Centuri...

A HAND enters frame and moves one of the "stars" -- they are bulbs. ANDIE'S on a ladder in THE PLANETARIUM, taking directions from ZACH.

ZACH (CONT.)
Just a little closer to Capella.
(she moves it)
That's it.

She climbs down and kisses him. They both stare up at "The Heavens". In the darkened room, the dome works its magic. It's a hypnotic moment. And they talk in hushed, reverential tones.

ANDIE (CONT.)
You ever think about it?

ZACH
Going up again? After my inner ear thing I--
(beat)
Even when you're there it's... like a memory. Like you really aren't there. I mean you've seen it in all the pictures--
(she looks skeptical)
Really, you look out and see the earth and it looks like every picture you've seen of the--

She knows he's lying for her benefit, trying to make her feel less bad about not going up.

ANDIE
Zach...

He looks down, then around at the "stars".

ZACH
Yeah. I think about it.
(beat)
Every day.

Arm in arm, they're silhouetted against the dome. The stars shine down at them, beckoning...

FADE OUT.

EXT. PATH - DAY

JINX marches with purpose, heading for the Museum...

CUT TO:

INT. ZACH'S OFFICE - DAY

ZACH'S at his desk, preoccupied with paperwork. There's a KNOCK at the door.

ZACH
Come in.

JINX strolls in. ZACH doesn't even look up.

JINX
Books.

ZACH
Help yourself, son.

He still doesn't look up as JINX rolls to the bookshelves, scanning titles. With a clawed hand, he pull several down. But as he turns, a tacked-up CAMP SCHEDULE catches his "eye".

It READS: "THURS. 9:00 P.M., SHUTTLE FRF, TEST PAD 39A".

JINX
What is FRF?

ZACH
(still working)
Flight Readiness Firing. Remember, the Shuttle main engine test? About twenty seconds of pure volcano. You kids are gonna--
(finally looks up)
Jinx, what the hell are you doing here?

JINX
Max sits in the Shuttle?

ZACH
All the kids sit in, will sit in the Shuttle.

JINX pulls the SCHEDULE off the board.

JINX
I need this. Thank you for your cooperation.

ZACH
What for?

JINX
Max in space.

ZACH
(going back to work)
Space Shuttle, Jinx.

The ROBOT ambles out.

JINX
Whatever you say...

CUT TO:

INT. SIMULATOR/MISSION CONTROL ROOM - DAY

The SHUTTLE SIMULATOR sits across the room, our kids inside. ANDIE'S with the YELLOW TEAM; they're running Mission Control.

It's all part of the Competition and ZACH'S scoring our kids' performance on a clipboard. We HEAR various technical data being relayed back and forth.

ZACH
(to ANDIE)
They're doing pretty well.

ANDIE
No one's pulled a gun yet...

CUT TO:

INT. SHUTTLE SIMULATOR - DAY

Flying the simulator, KEVIN and KATHRYN are stuck side by side at the controls -- and not real pleased about it. Efficiently flipping switches, they're doing their jobs -- but filling every routine exchange with a blistering vengeance.

KEVIN
(smacks a button)
Range scale at orbit on primary.

KATHRYN
(smacks it harder)
Roger, secondary.

KEVIN
(punches a switch)
Enter OMS-1 burn program, pilot.

KATHRYN
(slams it into computer)
Roger, OMS, Commander.

KEVIN
Standby, pilot.

KATHRYN
Standing by, asshole--

ANDIE (V.O.)
Hey!

BACK TO:

MISSION CONTROL
Keeping score, ZACH knocks off 15 points. Exasperated, ANDIE turns the page in her FLIGHT SCRIPT.

KID/FLIGHT DIRECTOR
Shuttle, we have orbit confirmed, 125 nautical miles, inclination of 35 degrees. You're in position for Satellite-1 deploy...

CUT TO:

SIMULATOR.
The other KIDS are out of their seats and at their stations.

RUDY'S at the RMS panel (the mechanical arm) nervously eyeing the controls. TISH is at Communications, wearing miniature Slinky earrings and Ray Bans.

TISH
Houston, activating cargo bay doors.

Outside the cargo bay window, WE SEE a small version of the SHUTTLE ARM, a SATELLITE at its end.

KEVIN
You're on, Rude-man.

Nervously, RUDY starts the manuver...
He gets the SATELLITE smoothly out of the bay. It's going like clockwork until --

BACK TO:

ZACH flips to another flight script on his clipboard.

ZACH
(to MISSION CONTROL KID)
Okay, instigate emergency power loss scenario.

KID/MISSION DIRECTOR
Yes, sir. Killing power.

The KID hits a panel switch and --

CUT TO:

The ARM stops moving. RUDY tries punching buttons, getting even more nervous.

TISH
(to RUDY)
Just be cool...

KATHRYN
Houston, experiencing electrical failure. Switching to auxiliary cells.

RUDY opens the ELECTRICAL PANEL below the RMS controls. He checks the COLOR-CODED WIRING against a diagram.

MAX
It's the fat one.

RUDY
I know what I'm doing.
(holds up wire)
It's the green next to the blue.

He connects them and --

ZAP.
ALL THE LIGHTS GO OUT. There's a pitch black pause and then --

KATHRYN (V.O.)
(exasperated)
Rudy!

RUDY (V.O.)
I've got it now.

Another ZAP and -- KLAXONS BLARE! THE LIGHTS STROBE ON AND OFF in lunacy.

KATHRYN
Switch back to the mains!

KEVIN
How do <u>you</u> know?

TISH
(staring at lights)
Groovadelic...

KATHRYN
(pissed)
C'mon! Just crosswire it!
Christ, I'll do it....

KATHRYN jumps out of her seat.

KEVIN
Hey -- sit down!
(she doesn't)
That's an order!

But KATHRYN ignores him, leaving her post. She tries to push between MAX and RUDY for the panel.

MAX
Let me do it!

KATHRYN
I'm gonna do it!

TISH
(to KATHRYN)
Stop buttin' in! You're like always buttin' in!

RUDY
I'm doing it!

MAX
You never let me do anything!

RUDY
Get outta here!

And WHACK. MAX kicks RUDY. RUDY smacks him back on top of the head. KATHRYN pushes for the wiring... IT'S TOTAL CHAOS.

BACK TO:

ANDIE. She grabs the mike. The Mission Controls KIDS are laughing.

ANDIE
What the hell's going on in there?! We're showing another OMS burn--

IN THE SIMULATOR
KEVIN looks at the board.

KEVIN
She must've hit it getting up--

ZACH (V.O.)
Why isn't the Pilot at her post?!

KEVIN is watching the melee with disdain.

KEVIN
Cause she's too busy doing someone else's job.

KID/MISSION DIRECTOR (V.O.)
You're falling out of orbit, Shuttle.

ANDIE (V.O.)
Take over, Commander!

KEVIN
I don't know how the OMS work -- that's her job...

BACK TO:

MISSION CONTROL The YELLOW TEAM thinks it's a riot.

KID/FLIGHT DIRECTOR
Your orbit's decaying, Shuttle. You're coming up on atmospheric interface.
(to other KID)
They're gonna be toast.

ZACH
Your ship's out of control! Take over, Kevin!

CUT TO:

KLAXONS BLARING, the KIDS still fighting in the back, KEVIN couldn't care less. He's got his feet up on the controls.

ZACH (CONT.-V.O.)
Pilot?! Do you copy, Pilot?!

KEVIN
(like a phone operator)
Sorry, she's busy. Can you call back later?

KID/MISSION DIRECTOR (V.O.)
You're coming up on interface, Shuttle.

KEVIN
Roger that, Houston.
(turns around)
Ladies and gentlemen, please

MORE

KEVIN (CONT)
return your seats and tray tables to their full upright positions and extinguish all smoking materials, we're--

And BANG! The HATCH whips open and ANDIE storms in.

ANDIE
Do you know what you've done?!

There's a shamed silence and then --

TISH
It was Kathryn--

KATHRYN
No Rudy couldn't--

ANDIE
SHUT UP!

The KIDS freeze mid-sentence.

ANDIE (CONT.)
I don't wanna hear it. I can't hear it --
(slow & serious)
Cause you're all dead.

Her seriousness sends a chill down their spines. ANDIE isn't kidding.

KEVIN
(not buying it)
Oh, come on.

ANDIE
You just disintegrated during re-entry! Don't you know what that means?! You're dead. Every one of you. Because you couldn't work as a team.
(turns to KEVIN)
And you're responsible.

KEVIN
Me?! But she--

ANDIE
You're Shuttle Commander. You're responsible for all of them. You're responsible for everything that happens on your ship.

KEVIN
Hey, I didn't ask to be responsible.

ANDIE
That's your excuse for killing four people?!

KEVIN
(laughs)
I don't believe this. No one got killed. I mean, hey --
(beat)
It's only Space Camp.

CUT TO:

BUT NOT FOR LONG. A computer screen appears, with the words: "LAUNCH POSSIBILITIES". And we see that Jinx is back in the

COMPUTER ROOM

One arm plugged in, Jinx continues to speak his questions as we follow the conversation on the screen.

JINX: Max in Shuttle during FRF. Possibility of actual launch?

VDT: None found.

JINX: What about NASA Contingency Files?

VDT: Files SECURE. Access number please?

Jinx is thrown by that one. After a moment he gives what looks like a shrug, then:

A VERITABLE BLIZZARD OF NUMBERS

Crosses the screen, starting with 1, then 11, then 111, almost faster than the eye can see, every number combination imaginable. This goes on for five seconds -- faster and faster -- until: BEEP.

VDT: Good morning, Dr. Griswold. How can NASA help you this morning?

JINX: Contingency Files: FRF Launch Possibilities.

VDT: *Please Wait*
(long pause)
Sole Possibility: WORST CASE SITUATION #10491

JINX: Define 10491

VDT: THERMAL CURTAIN FAILURE -- Failure of the heat shield during engine testing causes imminent ignition of one of the 2 Solid Rocket Boosters. Result: Forced Launch.

JINX: Why?

VDT: A Shuttle rising with only one Booster will pinwheel and crash.

A GRAPHIC display of the SHUTTLE appears on the screen. Rising with only its main ENGINE and ONE BOOSTER LIT, it arcs to the side and -- CRASHES in an "explosion" of WHITE LIGHT.

VDT: Therefore, if one booster is certain to ignite, the other must be ignited as well. Shuttle must be launched into orbit in order to avoid destruction on the launch pad.

The same SHUTTLE GRAPHIC appears but this time the SECOND BOOSTER "IGNITES" too and the ship rises into a perfect launch.

JINX: How to Create Thermal Curtain Failure?

VDT: SECURE. Access Number please?

Jinx lets out a bleep of exasperation. Again the

BLIZZARD OF NUMBERS

inundates the screen. It lasts ten seconds this time. Finally:

VDT: Good morning, Dr. von Braun. How can NASA help you this morning?

JINX: How to create Thermal Curtain Failure?

VDT: NASA has determined that a minimum of 12 design, 47 construction, and 8 operator errors would be necessary <u>simultaneously</u> for a Thermal Curtain Failure, resulting in probability of one such failure every 4.9 million shuttle years. CONCLUSION: Impossible.

Jinx yanks his arm out of the computer connection.

CUT TO:

INT. BOYS BUNK - DUSK

MAX comes into the empty dorm, looking around.

MAX
Jinx? You in here?
(confused-to self)
...Where is he?...

ANDIE (O.S.)
C'mon, Max.

ANDIE'S in the doorway, impatient.

ANDIE (CONT.)
The bus is gonna leave without you.

Grudgingly, he follows her out...

CUT TO:

INT. COMPUTER ROOM - NIGHT

Jinx looks like a kid cramming for an exam. Using all his arms, spread in a circle around him are SHUTTLE BLUEPRINTS, PROCEDURES, CIRCUITRY SCHEMATICS and BOOKS.

His head is literally spinning as he SCANS from one to the other...

JINX
How to create Thermal Curtain Failure...too many errors, too many errors, how to create Thermal Curtain Failure, too many errors....

It's beginning to sound like a chant until -- suddenly -- he stops. Everything else falls away except the procedural manual, which he stares at like a man in a daze.

JINX (CONT.)
Maybe not too many errors.
Maybe no errors at all...

CUT TO:

THE SHUTTLE

On the launch pad. This is what we've been waiting for. And, LIT UP AT NIGHT, it delivers. It's an awesome sight.

CUT TO:

INT. NASA TEST CONTROL - NIGHT

Where we can see the same image on a hundred video monitors.

THE KIDS ARE BROUGHT IN, and they stand there wide-eyed. It's a hell of a lot more high-tech than what's at camp.

On the floor, Andie and Zach are greeting the LAUNCH DIRECTOR.

DIRECTOR
--we'll try not to overburden you up there...

ANDIE
(laughs)
With what? There's hardly anything to do.

DIRECTOR
Well, you might have to clean up after our friends, once it's over.

Zach is bringing him over to meet the kids.

ZACH
Guys, this is Chris Deightman, he'll be running the test tonight.

Ad lib hellos: the kids are somewhat intimidated.

ZACH
I hope you're gonna give my kids a good show?

DIRECTOR
Like sitting on top of an earthquake. Any weak bladders here?

KEVIN
How about weak stomachs?

CUT TO:

EXT. LAUNCH TOWER ELEVATOR - NIGHT

In the elevator, Andie and the kids are slowly rising up toward the shuttle. Andie gives a box of headsets to Kevin; he starts handing them out.

ANDIE
Wear these radio mikes to talk to Control. The communication system's out being readied for next month's launch.

KEVIN
(gives headset to RUDY)
Pass this to the Klingon.

Rudy gives it to Max.

ANDIE
Now remember, once we're in the Shuttle--

KIDS (IN UNISON)
(sick of hearing it)
Don't touch anything.

The elevator stops. Down the corridor -- the open SHUTTLE HATCH. A weak-kneed but giddy GREEN TEAM is coming out, hooting and rebel-yelling it up.

GREEN KID
(to our KIDS)
What a rush! Stoner almost threw up.

Some of our kids looks like they're having second thoughts...

ANDIE
Relax, kids. In ten minutes it'll all be over...

CUT TO:

INT. COMPUTER ROOM - NIGHT

A flash of light. JINX is patched into the NASA COMPUTER. On the VDT appears -- a schematic of the SHUTTLE and its BOOSTERS...

CUT TO:

INT. NASA TEST CONTROL - NIGHT

Everyone's preparing for the next engine test.

NASA #1
T minus 30, go for on board computers, go for auto-sequence--

DIRECTOR
Standing by for Atlantis Flight Readiness Firing, everything looks good from our side. Atlantis, did you copy T minus 30?

ANDIE (V.O.)
Roger, copy.

DIRECTOR
Everybody hanging loose up there?

CUT TO:

INT. SHUTTLE - NIGHT

KEVIN and KATHRYN are strapped into the front seats. Behind them -- actually, UNDER THEM, since the shuttle is pointing upward -- sit Tish, Rudy, Max, and -- at the computer, Andie.

ANDIE
They better be -- I let the big kids sit up front.

Beside ANDIE, TISH has her eyes screwed shut, Max is drumming in anticipation, and Rudy sits totally, perfectly still.

Above them, Kevin is fretting.

KEVIN
I never did like roller coaster rides.

KATHRYN
Afraid you can't take it...?

INT. NASA TEST CONTROL - NIGHT

Things are calm.

NASA #1
T minus 20, go for SRB Hydraulic Power Units.

DIRECTOR
Okay, we'll be looking for another seconds of engine run.

CUT TO:

INT. THE SHUTTLE - NIGHT

Everyone is beginning to tense. Kathryn turns to Kevin.

KATHRYN
See, only eighteen seconds...

NASA #1 (V.O.)
T minus 10,9,8,7,6,5,4 -- go for main engine start, we have main engine start -- simulate booster ignition--

The RUMBLE BEGINS, almost instantly turning into a deafening ROAR.

OUTSIDE, UNDER THE TEST TOWER

A huge wall of flame is pouring out --

INSIDE

The kids are shaking with the vibration, but having the time of their lives -- except for TISH.

NASA #2 (V.O.)
Main engines at 100%.

A cheer can be heard over the microphones.

CUT TO:

JINX AT THE COMPUTER

Suddenly -- "CLICK". On his schematic of the Shuttle, between the ENGINES and a BOOSTER --
A YELLOW DOT APPEARS...

CUT TO:

NASA TEST CONTROL

NASA #2
We have 104%, still looks good on all three SSME's.

NASA #1
T plus 7, 8 --

CUT TO:

THE KIDS, enjoying the hell out of their "ride"...

NASA #1 (V.O.)
-- 9, 10 --

Suddenly over their headsets, an unmistakable voice --

JINX (V.O.)
Hi Max.

MAX
Hey....Jinx?

ANDIE
Who?

JINX (V.O.)
Bye Max.

BACK TO:

JINX AT THE COMPUTER

As, "CLICK," the DOT turns RED--

BACK TO:

NASA --

Where people suddenly begin to move.

NASA #2
We have an overheat indication on left booster.

DIRECTOR
What kind of temperature--?

NASA #3
1200 Degrees, climbing.

DIRECTOR
Impossible...

NASA #3
Good God, now it's 1575!

Zach is edging toward the Launch Director.

ZACH
Terminate it, Chris--

NASA #3
It's past the red -- we're gonna lose the left booster--

INSIDE THE SHUTTLE

Andie is unbuckling her harness.

ANDIE
(into mike)
Then light both boosters! Kathryn, the seat. NOW--

This is not easy. Kathryn has to climb down and Andie has to climb up. Andie is already climbing up; Kathryn tries to climb down the other side.

TISH
What's happening---?

IN NASA CONTROL

Klaxons are starting to BLARE.

ZACH
Chris, terminate the test, for God's sake!

DIRECTOR
We can't cut the mains if there's any chance the boosters'll go.

ZACH
Why not?! That's what's making them--
(realizing)
...It'll launch if you light the boosters!

DIRECTOR
We may have to launch...

ZACH
There are kids in there -- it's not flight ready! You can't send that thing up--

DIRECTOR
And if the left booster goes by itself there'll be dead kids in there--

Zach watches in horror as a frenzied launch procedure begins.

IN THE SHUTTLE

Andie is finally struggling into the front seat, trying to check switches and buckle herself in at the same time--

Below her, Kathryn slips and falls against Tish.

ANDIE
Kathryn, get in the seat--

IN NASA CONTROL--

NASA #1
5, 4 --
(looks to Launch Director)

DIRECTOR
Arm booster igniters--
(everyone watches him; finally:)
Light 'em.

OUTSIDE--

An unbelievable explosion of flame from the two BOOSTERS--

IN THE SHUTTLE--

Kathryn still hasn't made it into her seat as the cockpit starts to SHAKE in earnest. She screams, reaching out for anything to hold onto--

IN NASA CONTROL--

Zach watches in disbelief as--

NASA #1
Still 100% on mains -- My god...
(pauses)
We have lift-off...

OUTSIDE--

Night turns to day as the THUNDERING SHUTTLE RISES...
FURTHER AWAY -- ALSO OUTSIDE

stands JINX. Silhouetted against the fire of the SHUTTLE climbing into the sky, he raises one of his arms and waves...

INSIDE THE SHUTTLE

The ROAR of launch is deafening; the kids are plastered to their seats. Except, we realize, for Kathryn:

She NEVER MADE IT TO HER SEAT--! She's right now pinned by the G-force against the back instrument panel, and moaning in pain and terror. Rudy reaches, but can't get to her.

NASA #1 (V.O.)
Atlantis, roll program is in.

ANDIE
Roger, roll.

Through the windows we see the ship begin to turn--

TISH
What's happening, oh God what's happening?

Every face shows the terror and shock of what's happening...

DIRECTOR (V.O.)
Andie, throttle back to 65, you're now passing through period of maximum dynamic pressure.

Andie finally realizes that Kathryn didn't make it into her chair. She looks back and sees Max and Rudy reaching for her.

ANDIE
Kathryn, it's all right, just stay there, it's only three G's, it'll be over in a couple minutes--

Kathryn manages a nod.

IN NASA CONTROL

Zach is leaning down, peering into a monitor.

ZACH
Andie, hang in there, just hang in there.

DIRECTOR
Status check--

NASA #1
BOOSTER--

Different voices will answer him so fast he won't even have to stop. Thankfully, they all say the same word: "GO!"

NASA #1
FIDO-- ("GO!")
GNC-- ("GO!")
EGIL-- ("GO!)
We're go at forty seconds, go at throttle up.
TRACKING--

No answer, of course. The director smacks himself on the forehead.

DIRECTOR
Call Goddard NOW -- there's nobody to track this damn thing, they're all asleep! Get Spain and Sydney too, get every damn ground station you can find--

A scramble begins.

IN THE SHUTTLE

Andie takes a deep breath and gets hold of herself.

ANDIE
All right, everybody, we're going to drop the Solid Boosters,

ANDIE (CONT)
just like in the exercise.
Kevin, they're on your side --
arm the separators.

Kevin is lost: there must be four million switches...

ANDIE
Kevin--!

KEVIN
(panicked)
I don't know which ones!

ANDIE
The left ones, the whole bank,
weren't you there that day?!

NASA #1 (V.O.)
Atlantis, you're go for SRB sep--

ANDIE
HIT THEM!
(he does)
Roger, SRB sep...

OUTSIDE THE SHIP,

the two Solid Rocket Boosters slowly fall away.

CUT TO:

NASA. It's pins and needles...

NASA #2
They have SRB sep.

NASA #1
Press for MECO, Atlantis.

Her VOICE is suddenly GARBLED.

ZACH
(nto mike)
Andie?!

NASA #2
We're losing voice contact.

NASA #3
She's only on a short-throw
radio mike -- the COM panel
wasn't finished yet.

Andie's VOICE FADES OUT altogether.

ZACH
You're telling me she's out of range! How's she gonna fly that ship if we can't talk to her?

No one has an answer to that question.

CUT TO:

IN THE SHUTTLE

as Andie yanks off her useless radio-headset and shoots a glance at the empty panel labelled "COMMUNICATIONS"...

ANDIE
All right, if that's the way it is. Let's stand by, you're go for MECO...and mark it.

She's hitting switches, doing both sides of the dialogue.

OUTSIDE THE SHIP

The Main Engines stop firing.

INSIDE--

ANDIE
Houston, MECO: 25670, up at 220fps. Roger, Atlantis, copy Main Engine Cut Off, you're doing very well indeed... Go for tank sep.
(she turns)
Kevin, the switches underneath. External Tank.

KEVIN
You mean to tell me we can't talk to them anymore?

ANDIE
You had something you wanted to say? Hit the switches.

MAX
Get us down, please get us down--

ANDIE
Right now you better worry about getting us up...

OUTSIDE THE SHIP

The huge External Tank slowly separates from the shuttle. Atlantis looks lean and unencumbered now.

CUT TO:

NASA CONTROL

A silence has fallen over the room. They're just waiting. The Launch Director leans in to Zach, his eyes glued on a panel.

ZACH
They're still climbing...
(urging on)
C'mon...

DIRECTOR
C'mon...

Everyone's holding his breath. Across the room, a Technician's listening to a headset.

NASA #7
Goddard is up--
(a general sigh of relief)
And pretty confused about what the hell is going on...

DIRECTOR
Who isn't...?

The Technician still listens, then -- JUMPS TO HIS FEET --

NASA #7
Goddard says they've achieved orbit!

And the place goes wild with CHEERS!

CUT TO:

IN THE SHUTTLE

there are no cheers, only choking fear among the kids, somehow made worse by the eerie quiet now that the engines are off. ANDIE is the only one who's beginning to calm down.

ANDIE
Ladies and gentlemen, I believe we're in orbit.

TISH
NO!

MAX
(crying)
I want to go...home, I don't want to be up here, I want to go home.

ANDIE
Max, we're going to go home, as soon as we can.

MAX
No we're not. The ship's not flight ready, we're probably missing all kinds of stuff.

ANDIE
Max, we're all scared, and we're all going to have to work together, but we're going home.

MAX turns away. Suddenly, KEVIN YELLS OUT:

KATHRYN is FLOATING next to him!

ANDIE
Kathryn, are you all right?!

KATHRYN
I...think so...it was quite... a ride.

TISH
Oh, God, she's floating, I'm gonna be sick...

KEVIN is staring at KATHRYN. It's one thing to go in Moonwalkers and Neutral Buoyancy Tanks, another to actually see the real thing.

KEVIN
You're...floating...

ANDIE
What do you expect?

KEVIN
Oh...my...God....

Rudy is starting to recover, unbuckling his belt, floating out of his chair.

RUDY
We're weightless! Look at this, we are weightless!

KATHRYN
(to Kevin)
Go ahead, it feels kind of neat...

KEVIN looks at KATHRYN and RUDY as they float around. Not to be outdone, he does the same.

ANDIE
(checking on everybody)
Tish, are you gonna make it?

No answer. Andie whips around and sees--

TISH -- tears filling her eyes and a beatific smile on her lips. She's staring out the port-side, her face bathed in brilliant light.

ANDIE looks. KEVIN looks. The light hits them, the AWE HITS THEM, and now we too see --

THE SUN

Rising behind a black curve. Its brilliance illuminates the black -- slowly, glowingly... revealing it to be ---

THE EARTH.

TISH
I never thought I'd see anything that...beautiful...

Finally even MAX unbuckles and floats over -- in order to get a better look.

Tears are filling ANDIE'S eyes as well.

ANDIE
Please, God, we'll get home, but I'm so glad I didn't miss this....

KEVIN and KATHRYN find themselves close to each other at the window. Too close, his face against her hair, smelling it: she feeling the warmth of his cheek and his mouth against her. She pulls away...

KATHRYN
How can we get home if they can't communicate with us?

ANDIE
(gathers kids together)
Listen, I want to make something clear. The communications
MORE

ANDIE (CONT)
panel is not connected to telemetry or guidance. They can still monitor all the functions on the ship, and they can still bring us in on auto. We simply have to wait for the next re-entry window that would bring us down at Edwards.

TISH
Why Edwards -- isn't that in California?

ANDIE
Edwards has a Micro-Wave Landing System. They can bring us down the whole way, and all we'd have to do is switch on the landing gear.
(turns to Max)
You hear me, Max? The whole way.

She floats over to the main computer, punches keys.

ANDIE
And it goes like this. The next window for Edwards is less than three revolutions from now. Four hours. You'll be home in time for breakfast.

Even Max begins to relax.

CUT TO:

IN NASA CONTROL

Things have settled down a bit. Zach is on the phone.

ZACH
Look, it's their job to ask all those questions, just tell 'em that five kids and one instructor are missing--
(thinks about that)
No, go ahead and tell them the truth -- they won't believe it anyway...

A Technician approaches the Director.

NASA #4
Chris, you want to look at this...
(hands the director a printout)
This is the telemetry record of the test. Look at the Solid Booster readings.

The Director starts to lean forward in his chair.

DIRECTOR
What am I missing? These are all normal...

NASA #4
Exactly. Our computers got their data from this, yet somehow we registered 800 degrees higher.
(the Director stares)
Somebody changed the software, sir. Somebody wanted us to think we had an overheat.

DIRECTOR
(the enormity hits him)
You're saying...there was no Thermal Curtain Failure?

NASA #4
Sir, that booster wasn't hot enough to fry an egg...

Zach is off the phone now, standing behind the Director, as other Technicians gather.

DIRECTOR
...Then there was no need to light it..., and there was no need...to launch...

They all look at each other. Zach sits down.

ZACH
Please God, there's a window in four: Let's just bring 'em down.

There are a hundred silent "Amens" to that.

NASA #1 pushes his wheeled desk chair back from his monitor.

NASA #1
We have a problem...

Everyone turns to him.

NASA #1
We have to find an earlier window.

ZACH
What do you mean, earlier window? We're only two-and-a-half revolutions away--

NASA #1
See, the ship wasn't flight ready...

He doesn't want to say it but --

NASA #1
They won't be alive in two-and-a-half revolutions...

CUT TO:

IN THE SHUTTLE

"OXYGEN" -- the word in C.U. on the Shuttle life support panel.

We immediately realize what he was talking about. And so does

KATHRYN

She's already flipped four of the six OXYGEN GAUGE LIGHTS. They all flash RED -- "empty". She flips the fifth -- RED. She hesitates but nervously hits the sixth and -- RED. She swallows hard and speaks into her headset.

KATHRYN
Andie?

But Andie's already there.

ANDIE
I see. They hadn't brought on the liquid oxygen yet.

KATHRYN
(trying to stay calm)
What're we gonna do?

ANDIE doesn't have an answer...

CUT TO:

INT. COMPUTER ROOM - NIGHT

JINX is at the computer. The VDT reads:

RE-ENTRY WINDOW.....3 hrs. 42 min
ESTIMATED OXYGEN SUPPLY.....3 hrs. 36 min

JINX: Will Max die?

VDT: PROBABILITY 100%. Oxygen needed after reentry as well, until shuttle lands -- another 28 minutes.

JINX: How get Max down sooner?

VDT: NASA is working on the problem.

JINX pulls his arm out and turns around with purpose.

JINX
Jinx is helping NASA tonight.

CUT TO:

EXT. NASA COMPOUND - NIGHT

A roadsign reads "LAUNCH CONTROL" with an arrow. JINX lumbers past, heading in that direction.

He steps into the road but -- steps back. A CAR zips past. He steps again -- BUT LOOKS BOTH WAYS this time, and crosses the road...

CUT TO:

IN THE SHUTTLE

Now everyone's clustered around the life support system. ANDIE'S rechecking the lights.

ANDIE
All we have's the auxiliary.

There's a simmering panic among the KIDS, but they're keeping it under control.

KEVIN
How long'll that last?

ANDIE
Almost up to the window, but that would leave nothing for reentry.

No one says anything for a few moments.

TISH
(serious)
No... This is too weird...

ANDIE
Tish..., we are going to get home.

Though she still has no idea how.

KATHRYN
Okay. The problem is, no liquid oxygen was brought on for life support. What about other liquid oxygen, what about the propulsion system!

Everyone starts to get excited -- except Max.

MAX
The propulsion system uses carbon tetroxide: we want to breath, not dry-clean our clothes...

They all slump again.

ANDIE
Maybe we'll just have to go pick up some oxygen....

Andie breaks into a smile; the kids look at her like she's crazy.

KEVIN
What, at a 7-11?

ANDIE
Yeah, called Daedalus.

KATHRYN
The space station....

MAX
And it would have life support....

KEVIN
Can we get there in time?

ANDIE'S already heading for the ladder.

ANDIE
We better damn well try.

CUT TO:

FLIGHT DECK.

ANDIE and KEVIN are at the controls, hurriedly preparing to change orbits.

ANDIE
...Okay, we're go for higher orbit and Daedalus interface. APUs power up.

KEVIN
Roger, power up.
(flips a switch)

ANDIE
Give me a read on our course bearing.

Kevin scans the instrument panel, lost.

ANDIE (CONT.)
Course bearing!

KEVIN
Uh...Gee...

ANDIE
I know you know that -- you did it in the simulator!

Kevin pulls up his sleeve, there's writing up and down his arm.

KEVIN
I cribbed it!

ANDIE
Out of the seat, Commander! Kathryn.
(he hasn't moved)
OUT!

Kathryn's unable to keep from smiling a little at Kevin's total embarrassment. She straps herself into his seat.

ANDIE
Course bearing.

KATHRYN
0-Niner-five-five-niner.

ANDIE
Standby for OMS burn. And go for OMS.

OUTSIDE

We see the OMS jets fire, and the Shuttle starts to arc away.

CUT TO:

IN NASA CONTROL - NIGHT

Everyone is gathered around NASA #1's telemetry screen.

NASA #1
Yes, they're starting to move.

NASA #3
Tracking says they're heading in the right direction.

ZACH
Yes! She thought of it too.
(a huge sigh of relief)
Go directly to Daedulus, do not pass go, do not collect 200 dollars. Just go, kid...

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD - NASA COMPOUND - NIGHT

JINX is marching determinedly down the side of the road.

JINX
Hello. Jinx is helping NASA tonight. Hello. Jinx is helping--

Up ahead the robot sees a GARBAGE TRUCK at the NASA motorpool gas pump...

AT THE PUMP

The ATTENDANT leans toward the driver.

DRIVER
You know what they're saying, don't you? They're saying a bunch of kids stole the damn thing.

ATTENDANT
(quite certain)
Aliens... Had a broke down ship and needed a new one fast...
(HEARS A NOISE-spooked)
What was that?!

There's another NOISE from the rear of the truck. Suspicious, the attendant creeps around the back.

THE REAR OF THE GARBAGE TRUCK

is filled with high-tech detritus. Jinx is there, sprawled out and seemingly "broken" like all the other objects. The attendant doesn't give him a second look.

ATTENDANT
(coming back)
Oh, man, too much weirdness around here -- I gotta get me a low-pressure job...

CUT TO:

Jinx in the rear of the truck as it speeds down the road.

JINX
Jinx is help NASA tonight.

Up ahead, he sees a SIGN FOR THE TURN TO "LAUNCH CONTROL". They approach it and --

WHOA -- the truck speeds right past it. The robot's head spins back at his receding destination.

JINX (CONT.)
That was my stop.

Jinx and the truck disappear down the road and into the night...

CUT TO:

OUTSIDE THE SHUTTLE

A swatch of EARTH spinning below, the SHUTTLE arcs across frame...

CUT TO:

INSIDE --

ANDIE and KATHRYN are still at the controls.

ANDIE
What's our E.T.A. on Daedalus?

KATHRYN
Twenty-six minutes.

ANDIE
(looks at her)
You're good at this.

KATHRYN
Are you surprised?

Kathryn clearly thinks Andie doesn't like her, which isn't true. But Andie knows that now isn't the time to address it.

DOWN "BELOW"--

On Mid-Deck, Kevin and Rudy are floating next to each other, staring at something.

KEVIN
I'm not gonna try it. You try it.

RUDY
I'm not gonna try it. Let's get Maxie to try it!

They start to push Max toward the miniscule bathroom with its frightening looking retracting hose. We can hear the suction HISSING.

MAX
Get out of here. I'm not going near that thing.

KEVIN
Max, somebody has to try that thing, it's been a long time already--

MAX
(squirming)
Tell me about it...

KEVIN
So go in there -- you have less to lose.

Rolling her eyes at their juvenility, Tish pushes past all three of them and goes in.

KEVIN
(to Max)
See? Aren't you ashamed?

CUT TO:

SPACE -- DAEDULUS, THE SPACE STATION

looming ahead. It's a maze of triangulated, unfinished girders, but it's still pretty impressive when we realize -- as the Shuttle comes into FRAME -- just how BIG it really is.

CUT TO:

THE SAME -- FROM INSIDE THE SHUTTLE

As Kathryn and Andie watch it looming closer.

ANDIE
Isn't it hard to believe people have been here before us? Seems like we're so far away...

KATHRYN
Andie..., how are we going to get all the way down with no voicecom? The truth...

ANDIE
(after a pause)
I don't know...

RUDY (V.O.)
I had an idea about that.

They turn in surprise: Rudy has been floating behind them.

RUDY
If they can read our telemetry, then they know when we pull switches. If they know when we pull switches, then they'd know when we pull the same switch over and over again--

ANDIE
In code... Rudy, that's brilliant, that would work. We need a code, Morse Code, does anybody know any codes around here?
(Kathryn and Rudy look blank)
Well if we don't know any codes how are we going to--

KATHRYN
Wait a minute...
(calls out)
Tish--

Tish floats up from mid-deck.

TISH
Did you call me?

KATHRYN
Tish. Morse Code.

TISH
(a trick question?)
Yeah...?

KATHRYN
Do you know it?

TISH
Oh. Sure.

ANDIE
How do you know Morse Code?

TISH
(smiles)
I read it in a book once.

On Andie's confused look--

CUT TO:

TISH

being installed at an instrument panel, her feet being put in stirrups to keep her from floating away.

TISH
You mean I just keep switching this switch in Morse Code?

ANDIE
Till the cows come home.

With a shrug, Tish starts in...

CUT TO:

IN NASA CONTROL

CLOSE UP, we see the effects of switching that switch: a bright, beautiful instrument light is BLINKING ON AND OFF in obvious code. Anyone would see it.

But WE PULL BACK: There are other bright, beautiful lights surrounding that one. Lots of them. We PULL BACK FURTHER: Hundreds of them.

No one's giving ours a second look...

BACK TO:

INSIDE THE SHUTTLE

C.U. on the OXYGEN GAUGE -- it's dropping.

At the AIRLOCK, the KIDS are helping ANDIE on with her SPACE SUIT.

ANDIE
It should take me twenty minutes to get the oxygen. While I'm off the ship, Kathryn, you're in command.

Which doesn't sit well with Kevin...

ANDIE (CONT.)
(looks at him)
Do you copy?

KEVIN
...Loud and clear.

ANDIE gives them "thumbs up" and crawls into the AIRLOCK. Rudy closes the door behind her.

IN THE AIRLOCK

We hear the air hissing, being sucked out, see the tension on Andie's face. A RED LIGHT blinks on. Andie opens the door to:

THE CARGO BAY

She crawls through into the cavernous bay, exactly like the one we saw in the Neutral Buoyancy Tank.

She straps on an MMU (jetpack).

ANDIE
Ready...

IN THE FLIGHT DECK

The KIDS are at their stations.

KATHRYN
Go for Cargo Bay Doors.

RUDY
(punches a button)
Cargo Bay Doors activated.

BACK TO:

ANDIE. As she stares up and watches the CARGO DOORS slowly OPEN. It's like the Red Sea parting as they reveal --

THE BLACK VOID OF SPACE

It is awesome. And ANDIE'S staring like she's once again the awestruck child from the beginning...

OUTSIDE THE SHUTTLE

we see her floating up. Free. Untethered.

She looks back down -- the SHIP looks tiny. And SPACE looks incredibly big. Getting her bearings, she spots DAEDALUS...

FROM FAR OFF--

we see the spinning EARTH below with the Shuttle and Daedalus suspended above. The tiny figure of Andie starts jetting across...

INSIDE THE SHUTTLE

The kids are all at the windows watching Andie -- except for Rudy. His eyes are glued to the OXYGEN GAUGE...

CUT TO:

DAEDALUS

ANDIE manuvers close to a girder and grabs on. She starts slowly working her way across the structure. Climbing past a SOLAR PANEL, she's eerily reflected in its metallic surface...

Up ahead, she sees the TWO LIQUID OXYGEN TANKS. They're bracketed inside what's more or less a CHAMBER, "walled" by a triangular GRIDWORK.

ANDIE
I've got them.

She starts through the GRIDWORK and--

ANDIE (CONT)
...Oh damn--

THUNK. She can't fit through. She strains her arm -- still yards from the TANKS.

INSIDE THE SHUTTLE

There's growing panic on the faces of the kids. Andie comes over the headset.

ANDIE (V.O.)
I'm gonna try without the MMU.

OUTSIDE

Andie has tethered the jetpack to a girder. If determination alone could do it, her face says she will.

She puts one arm through the triangular opening, and then her

helmet. She starts to squeeze to get her other shoulder through... Squeezing so hard we can see the pain on her face but --

SHE CAN'T MAKE IT.

ANDIE
Goddamnit!

INSIDE THE SHIP

The kids are sweating. Rudy watches the gauge as it drops INTO THE RED...

OUTSIDE

Andie is trying again. One arm holding onto an inside girder, she's trying to pull herself through. Straining, she pulls, straining harder, but -- NO WAY.

ANDIE
I can't get them.

INSIDE THE SHIP

It's panic time.

TISH
(hysterical)
She has to! Tell her she has to squeeze through!

KEVIN
(to TISH)
She's trying!

TISH
She has to! Make her!

KATHRYN
Tish, she isn't small enough!

They all stop. They all look at each other. And then all heads turn to Max.

He turns white.

MAX
No. Uh-uh, no.

KEVIN
Max, you're the only one who's small enough--

KATHRYN
Max, somebody has to get the oxygen--

MAX
I can't go out there, I'm too scared to go out there!

Everyone is starting to shout at him, but Kevin waves them off. Instead he floats over and speaks in Max's ear.

KEVIN
Max, you're just a kid, and they have no right to make you do this. But I think you'll be interested to know that--
(whispers)
the Empire needs you...

MAX
That's all bullshit--

KEVIN
No, Max, only the settings are bullshit. People do those things, people are brave and they go against incredible odds, real people, people like you -- they look at the fear and say, yeah, I'm crapping in my pants, I'm a basket case, but I think...I have to do it anyway...
(no response)
Max, would you like a personal invitation from Captain Kirk--?

MAX
All right, all right, shut up--

He takes a breath and heads for the airlock.

CUT TO:

MAX IN A SPACE SUIT

It's hopelessly too big, but this is no time to quibble. Rudy opens the door.

KATHRYN
You're sure you wanna do this?

MAX
No.

KEVIN
(crouches to Max's height)
Max, you're braver than any of us.
(shakes his hand)
Good luck, man.

Kevin twists on Max's helmet -- he's so short all we can see are his eyes peering out. He steps into the AIRLOCK...

CUT TO:

OUTSIDE THE SHUTTLE

Max appears, tethered, floating out to the edge of the cargo door. Hanging weightless, he looks up, he looks right, he looks left -- HE LOOKS DOWN --

BELOW HIM--

his toes still in frame, we CAN SEE the beautiful, cloud-decked EARTH standing suspended.

And for a moment, Max forgets his fear, his face slackening in the pleasure, the grandeur of simply seeing. He nods without realizing it.

MAX
Okay.

KEVIN (V.O.)
Get on the arm, Max.

Max moves over to the RMS -- the huge arm used to manipulate things in space. As he holds on, it slowly starts to move toward:

DAEDALUS

Tools out, Andie's struggling to rachet off a girder. She doesn't see Max coming. He taps her on the shoulder--

SHE SCREAMS.

ANDIE
What are you doing here? I told you not to leave the ship.

MAX
What're you gonna do? Execute me?

And he FLOATS RIGHT THROUGH THE GRIDWORK and straight for the oxygen...

INSIDE THE SHIP

The kids are more sweaty now, from both the tension and the THINNING AIR. Watching Daedalus, Tish has her face pressed against the window. She turns to Rudy with a questioning look.

He looks down at the GAUGE -- it's PINNED IN THE RED...

BACK TO:

DAEDALUS

ONE TANK free, MAX is trying to unbolt the SECOND. Andie's clipping a tether to the first.

ANDIE
I'm gonna take this one to the arm.

MAX
(apologetically)
I'm hurrying, Andie.

ANDIE
I know you are.

She hits her MMU and starts off...

CUT TO:

THE KIDS. They watch ANDIE slowly drag the TANK towards the ARM. Ever so slowly... In the pilot's seat, KEVIN pulls on his collar, IT'S GETTING HARD TO BREATH Everyone's nerves are fraying. At the "arm" controls, KATHRYN'S having trouble.

KATHRYN
Keep the ship steady!

KEVIN
It is!

KATHRYN
We're too far away!

KEVIN
Just get the goddamn arm out there!

TISH whips around from the window.

TISH
Shut up! Both of you!

Suddenly -- A BUZZER BLARES.

KATHRYN
What's that?!

RUDY jumps to the GAUGE. He looks up, sickly.

RUDY
We just bottomed out.
(beat)
All we have is what air's left in the cabin...

It's spooky as the KIDS look around, as if they could see it...

CUT TO:

DAEDALUS

MAX has gotten the SECOND TANK free and hooks his tether to it. He starts crawling out of the gridwork, pulling the TANK after him but --

THUNK. It's STUCK in the girders.

For leverage, he grabs hold of a SOLAR PANEL CELL and yanks again. He doesn't see the cell start TO BEND... With all his might, he yanks again, pulling the tank free and---

RIP! The cell TEARS OFF and--

MAX FALLS--

Tumbling head over heels, MAX and the TANK are cartwheeling off into space--!

CUT TO:

ANDIE at the ARM. SHE SEES. He's arcing high above her, heading off for the void. She hits her jetpack and SHOOTS STRAIGHT UP. If she's fast enough she can intersect his path. If not...

CUT TO:

MAX. His horrified face spinning away from us. Spinning faster and faster...

CUT TO:

ANDIE. Rising slowly. Too slowly...

CUT TO:

THE KIDS. Watching helpless.

CUT TO:

ANDIE. Higher and higher...
MAX. Arcing overhead...

They're converging. It's going to be close.
SHE REACHES...
His arm, almost in grasp.
She reaches and --

MISSES!
He tumbles away and--
YANK.

His foot!
SHE'S GOT HIM BY THE FOOT.

The tethered TANK dangling, MAX clutches to her like a little monkey.

INSIDE THE SHIP--

The kids are hugging each other.... They watch Andie and Max start to descend toward the waiting arm.

CUT TO:

IN NASA CONTROL

Zach's leaning over two technician's as they watch readouts change on the RMS panel.

NASA #6
We show them cradling the arm.

ZACH
Let's hope they've got oxygen
at the end of it.

BACK TO:

INT. SHUTTLE - FLIGHT DECK

The KIDS aren't in good shape; THEIR BREATHING'S PRETTY SHALLOW. They're all staring out the aft window into the CARGO BAY at ANDIE and MAX with the OXYGEN. RUDY'S nervously scanning a book of DIAGRAMS. He speaks into his headset.

RUDY
Connect the tank to the...
the...

He flips pages, rechecking. Scared, TISH reflexively takes KATHRYN'S hand, then realizes and lets go --

RUDY (CONT.)
...Connect the tank to the
Blue valve.

IN THE CARGO BAY

A side panel off, ANDIE'S staring at *FIFTEEN DIFFERENT COLORED* VALVES and CONNECTORS.

ANDIE
(tense)
There are two Blue ones.
C'mon, Rudy, it's pure oxygen.
We make the wrong connection
and you're gonna be sitting
inside a fire-ball. You've
gotta get it right...

RUDY (V.O.)
It's the Blue that's next to
the Green.

ANDIE
(looks)
There is no Blue next to the
Green!

ON THE FLIGHT DECK

Rudy is shaking his head, panicking.

RUDY
I meant Yellow!

KATHRYN moves in next to him.

KATHRYN
Rudy, there isn't time for this.

RUDY pushes the book at her.

RUDY
Be my guest!

KATHRYN
I'm sorry, there isn't--

But this is no time to worry about feelings. She grabs the book.

KATHRYN
(to headset)
It's the Blue next to the
Red.

RUDY is shaking his head, but is intimidated by KATHRYN'S assurance.

RUDY
No....No..., it's the Yellow,
I know it...

ANDIE (V.O.)
Will somebody make up their mind please?!

KATHRYN
Andie, it looks like the Red.

RUDY
And I'm telling you I've been studying this for ten minutes: it's the Yellow! I'm not stupid. You may think I'm stupid, but I'm not--!

KATHRYN gasps, even at this moment surprised by the vehemence of his outburst. The other kids are looking as well.

CUT TO:

ANDIE. The TANK in place, she's about to snap the valve on.

ANDIE
Rudy, if you've ever been sure of yourself, this is the time.

RUDY (V.O.)
Just do it.

ANDIE does. She snaps it on, hits the valve and --

BACK TO:

THE FLIGHT DECK --

As WHOOSH! sweet air rushes in the vents. The KIDS stick to them like suckling pups... Except for KATHRYN, reeling, knowing she was wrong...

CUT TO:

NASA CONTROL

C.U. of an OXYGEN gauge RISING -- the whole place is CHEERING WILDLY. Zach hugs the Launch Director.

NASA #1
All right, everybody, they have the oxygen, and we have a window in four minutes.
(looks around)
Let's start to bring 'em down.

CUT TO:

INT. CARGO BAY - SHUTTLE

ANDIE gives the "hi sign" to the KIDS at the window as she's connecting the SECOND OXYGEN TANK.

ANDIE
Good job there, Rudy.

Indignant, MAX tugs on her tether.

MAX
Hey. What about me?

ANDIE looks at him.

ANDIE
You too, Captain.

He grunts and heads for the airlock. She snaps the connector on, starts to heave the TANK into place and --

CRACK. The hose RIPS.
ANDIE'S EYES. Frozen. There's a deadly HISS. And---

BOOM!

The tank HITS HER LIKE A ROCKET!
And SHOOTS her down the cargo bay at what looks like the speed of light! She hits the back wall with a sickening crunch.

IT'S A FROZEN MOMENT. MAX whips around, horrified. The KIDS FACES at the window.

And ANDIE...
Deathly still and floating. Floating up to the end of her TETHER, OUT OF THE CARGO BAY... Finally --

MAX
ANDIE!

MAX starts to go for her, when suddenly a shadow falls over him. He looks up to see --

THE CARGO BAY DOORS ARE CLOSING.

He turns panicked to the kids at the window.

MAX (CONT.)
What's happening?!

CUT TO:

NASA CONTROL

What's happening is -- NASA'S bringing them down.

NASA #3
(finger on switch)
Roger, Cargo Bay Doors.

NASA #1
Standby for RCS burn---

CUT TO:

IN THE SHUTTLE

TISH is pounding on the CARGO DOOR BUTTON -- but they won't stop closing. The KIDS frantically run to the panels -- all the dials and instruments are changing.

KATHRYN
It's NASA! They're bringing us down on Auto!

KEVIN rushes to the aft window.

KEVIN
C'mon, Max! Get her!

CUT TO:

MAX. Struggling to get to Andie's LINE.
The doors are CLOSING. ANDIE'S floating OUTSIDE them.

MAX kicks off --
And shoots up toward the doors. He'll never reach her line before they shut. But...

Closer...
He strains...
Closer... And--

BANG.
He yanks his hand back as the DOORS SLAM CLOSED with a resounding ECHO.

OUTSIDE THE SHUTTLE

From the closed cargo bay doors, Andie's LINE STRETCHES.
Thirty feet above the ship, her tiny figure hangs motionless...

INSIDE THE SHUTTLE

The kids are freaking out. KATHRYN'S screaming into her headset.

KATHRYN
Andie?! Andie, do you copy?!

CUT TO:

NASA CONTROL

ZACH and NASA haven't the faintest idea what's happening in space.

NASA #1
All right, when we hit the window we'll have a three second RCS burn to roll the bird--

NASA #4
T Minus 20 for window--

CUT TO:

OUTSIDE THE SHUTTLE

ANDIE'S face is melted in pain. She's fighting to stay conscious... Below her, the ship's NOSE JETS FIRE, turning the SHUTTLE around...

At the end of her tether, ANDIE'S DRAGGED ALONG...

CUT TO:

INSIDE THE SHIP

The kids are terrified; it's all happening too fast.

KEVIN
Can you make it stop?!

KATHRYN
I don't know! There's a manual override button-- Here.
(flips the cover off it)

TISH
But if we stop it, we'll miss the window --

MAX
What are you gonna just leave Andie? She'll burn up during reentry!

TISH
And if we don't reenter we'll all die!

They all look at KATHRYN -- she's in command...

CUT TO:

ANDIE.
Blinking to stay conscious, she looks down at the moving ship.

ANDIE
...'take the window, Kathryn...
it s all you've got...

BACK TO:

KATHRYN.
Her hand poised over the BUTTON...

CUT TO:

INT. NASA - NIGHT

NASA #1
Standby for OMS burn.
(beat)
Ten, nine...

BACK TO:

KATHRYN.
The COUNTDOWN flashes above the OVERRIDE BUTTON.
KATHRYN stares at the KIDS. The BUTTON.

SHE DOESN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO...

"...8...7...6..."
Her hand hovers uncertain.

"...5...4..."
ANDIE. Floating above the ship.

"...3...2..."
The KIDS. Their lives in her hands.

"...1..."
She's still frozen and--

CLICK.
KEVIN JUMPS IN AND HITS THE BUTTON.

The countdown stops, the flashing lights fade as KEVIN barks out orders.

KEVIN
Max, get in the bay! Tish,
the cargo doors! I don't know
what the hell we're gonna do,
but we're not gonna let her die--

The KIDS rush off; KATHRYN sinks into the chair, shaking.

CUT TO:

CARGO BAY
At the top of the doors, MAX is in position holding onto the LINE. As the DOORS OPEN, he starts to pull ANDIE in...

CUT TO:

MID-DECK
KEVIN and RUDY grab hold of ANDIE as MAX pulls her through the AIRLOCK. They twist off her helmet -- unconscious, she looks in bad shape.

KEVIN
Let's get her to the bunk.

CUT TO:

NASA CONTROL

The room's again a madhouse. ZACH and the LAUNCH DIRECTOR are huddled with TECHNICIANS.

NASA #3
I don't know what's going on -- they overroad Auto!

DIRECTOR
And missed the window. The next ones's not for twelve hours?
(the technician nods)
And how much oxygen did they buy?

NASA #3
Not <u>that</u> much...

DIRECTOR
(almost to himself)
Why would they miss their last chance? What would make them do that?

Zach sits down, defeated. The Director looks at him.

ZACH
Chris, we've run out of miracles, I think...

The Director calls an ASSISTANT over.

DIRECTOR
(quietly)
Call Washington and call the White House. We may need some guidance in the next few hours...

CUT TO:

INSIDE THE SHUTTLE

ANDIE'S strapped into the BUNK; MAX and RUDY are anxiously waiting as KEVIN checks out her injuries. TISH comes down.

TISH
How's she doin'?

KEVIN
I think she shattered her arm and maybe some ribs.
(worried)
I don't know. Somebody should stay with her.

MAX
I'll stay with her.

KEVIN
(looks at him)
Okay, Max. Give a yell if there's any change.

Max settles in. The others head for the flight deck.

CUT TO:

FLIGHT DECK
The KIDS float up the ladder, dejected. They exchange a "what's the point" look. TISH goes back to tapping her Morse Code on the switch....

AT THE FLIGHT CONTROLS

KEVIN stares out the window at the spinning EARTH below. KATHRYN isn't staring at anything.

KEVIN
...So now we missed the window.
(no answer)
Do we have enough oxygen to last till the next one? No. Are we even sure that Andie's gonna make it? No.

KEVIN shakes himself. For the first time we see him really reacting, not faking, not scamming.

KEVIN
(not praying)
Oh, God. Oh, God....

KATHRYN is almost paralyzed by her own shame and fear, but she can't fail to see KEVIN'S suffering. She touches him.

KATHRYN
You did the right thing.

KEVIN
(looks back toward the others)
Do they think so?

KATHRYN
Andie's part of the crew. You took responsibility for all of them. Somebody had to.

She starts to choke up, shaking again. He takes her hand.

KEVIN
Hey....

KATHRYN
I didn't know what to do. I didn't know what to do...

KEVIN
Nobody did....

KATHRYN
But you decided. That's what a commander does, a commander decides!

KEVIN
Who cares? Who cares about commander now? Kathryn...

But she does care, very much.

KATHRYN
(with great difficulty)
I tried to be something my whole life....and it was all a lie...! Look at me--

He pulls her toward him, puts his arms around her.

KEVIN
Not now, come on. Let's just get out of this....

He holds her tight as she cries...

BEHIND THEM

RUDY is shaking his head.

RUDY
You mean to tell me Edwards is the only place in the world with this micro-wave landing system?

TISH
I don't know...

KEVIN turns around and looks at them.

KEVIN
White Plains.
(they stare blankly)
Didn't the shuttle once come down in White Plains?

KATHRYN
(wiping her face)
Yeah, the shuttle really came down in New York....

TISH
No, White Sands! It came down at White Sands, New Mexico in 1982 when there was bad weather at Edwards.

KATHRYN
(eyes wide)
Tish, make 'em hear you, will ya'? White Sands may be on the same revolution. They'd have to send up software!

Tish starts tapping twice as fast. Kathryn looks at Kevin.

KATHRYN
Did anybody ever tell you you're brilliant?

He kisses her. She kisses back.

CUT TO:

NASA CONTROL

A scene of utter depression, people sitting back in chairs, some leaning down with their heads in their hands.

At the panel where Tish's light is blinking, the Technician isn't even watching: he's checking figures in his log.

Zach and the Launch Director look about a hundred years old.

ZACH
There must be something we missed.

The Director can't even answer. Then in the corridor behind them, through the window, we see

JINX

popping up. He scans all around, then suddenly disappears to the right... followed by two SECURITY GUARDS, hot in pursuit!

With a crash the doors fly open. TECHNICIANS jump out of his way as JINX scuttles between equipment, trying to elude the GUARDS.

JINX
Hello. Jinx is helping Nasa tonight. Hello. Jinx is--
(ducks under table)
Someone help Jinx tonight.

Running over, ZACH waves the GUARDS off.

ZACH
How do you know about Max?

JINX
(pops head out)
Maybe no errors for Thermal Curtain Failure...

ZACH and the LAUNCH DIRECTOR look at each other in shock.

ZACH
Oh, no....

LAUNCH DIRECTOR
(beyond anger)
Dismantle it before it does any more damage.

ZACH commands JINX like the machine he is.

ZACH
Terminate your power cell.

JINX
Jinx only performs commands from Max.

Zach and the Director look at each other again. Things are beginning to fall into place.

ZACH
Max wants you to terminate.

JINX
He does?

ZACH
Yes.

There's a slight pause and --

JINX
So execute me--

And JINX tears off, looking for a place to hide. Suddenly, his SCANNER LOCKS IN on something O.S..

IT'S THE LIGHT -- TISH'S LIGHT.

JINX (CONT.)
MAX! Max talk!
He races over to the light and grabs onto the panel.

JINX (CONT.)
Max talk! He's talking!

The guards reach him and try to pull him away.

A TECHNICIAN sees the blinking light and taps at it, bewildered.

NASA #5
Christ, what a time for a malfunction...

Jinx is being pulled away.

JINX
Andie hurt! They say what do?

NASA #5
Bill, give me a hand with this, we gotta take the whole panel off.

NASA #6
The whole board's gonna go dark...

NASA #5
What can we do?

The two technicians bend down out of sight behind the board. Jinx is almost out the door.

JINX
It's CODE! They say what do?!

A moment passes. And then the technicians slowly reappear, turning alternately from the board to Jinx.

NASA #5
(finally)
Code!

The whole room virtually explodes into activity. Within seconds forty people are surrounding a TECHNICIAN taking down the Morse Code.

NASA #7
--request...software...alter-
nate...landing...strip....White--

ZACH
(hitting his head)
White Sands, WHITE SANDS!
There's a strip at White
Sands! We used it in '82!

DIRECTOR
(whips around)
We need a White Sands, Northrup
Strip window. Now. I also
need to know the condition of
the Microwave Landing System
there--
(looks at Zach)
Gee, I hope it wasn't one of
the kids who thought of that...

People are jumping.

NASA #4
White Sands is on the same rev
they're on now, they're already
late--

DIRECTOR
By how much?

NASA #4
Four minutes--

DIRECTOR
They can still do it--
(whips around)
MORE

DIRECTOR (CONT)
Tell them to begin an OMS burn right now, they have to backtrack 500 miles. Tell them the software's on its way--
(looks at Zach)
And get a helicopter over here, fast--

CUT TO:

INSIDE THE SHUTTLE

TISH is morosely tapping, trying to hold back the tears. Suddenly above her -- a LIGHT blinks on, FLASHING back at her. BUT SHE DOESN'T SEE IT...

A SECOND LIGHT starts to FLASH IN TANDEM. She looks up distractedly -- but looks back down.

ANOTHER LIGHT and ANOTHER LIGHT blink on till the WHOLE GODDAMN PANEL IS FLASHING in unison.

TISH looks up again distracted -- it still doesn't register!

She looks back down and -- it finally hits her like a freight train!

TISH
Whip me, beat me, make me write bad checks! It's NASA!

She grabs RUDY in a bear hug.

TISH (CONT.)
IT'S NASA!

MAX does a weightless backflip and yells down the ladder to the flight deck.

MAX
It's NASA!

Kathryn and Kevin grab each other a little too passionately -- and end up spinning around in about ten directions.

KATHRYN
(quietly)
It's NASA...

TISH (V.O.)
They need an OMS burn right now.

Kathryn and Kevin kiss.

KEVIN
Coming right up!

CUT TO:

NASA CONTROL

JINX is now regally ensconced in a chair, EVERYONE'S crowded around the LIGHT. The Director conveys instructions.

DIRECTOR
Tell Andie she has to use her own instruments for speed, she has to slow it down to 4800.

NASA #7
It's not Andie, they just told me Andie's hurt. Kathryn is flying the bird.

ZACH and the DIRECTOR look at each other.

DIRECTOR
Maybe you'd better be on that chopper...

ZACH starts to gather some things--

CUT TO:

IN THE SHUTTLE

It's a whirlwind. KEVIN'S checking gauges as TISH taps to NASA and RUDY takes down their answers.

TISH
--and Zach wants to know how Andie is.

IN MID-DECK

MAX is making sure ANDIE'S secure in the bunk. She's conscious now, but barely so.

ANDIE
Tell him I'm pissed that I'm such a spas'...

KEVIN (V.O.)
(yelling down)
Don't worry, Andie, you taught us well.

ANDIE
Did I?

ON THE FLIGHT DECK

Kevin looks in her direction and smiles.

KEVIN
No.
(beat)
But we'll fake it.
(turns to Kathryn)
Right?

KATHRYN looks panicked, her eyes are closed.

KATHRYN
I...can't do it--

KEVIN
What do you mean you can't do it? Who else is gonna do it?!

KATHRYN
I let everybody down before.

KEVIN
You're the only one who can fly this thing!

KATHRYN
I can't do it!

KEVIN
All right. Then I'll do it.

He pushes up his sleeve -- the CRIB NOTES on his arm.

KATHRYN
(deadpan)
I'll do it.

She swallows, takes a deep breath--

KATHRYN
All right, standby for OMS burn--

KATHRYN'S hands are tight on the controls. Each KID is watching her. This is the last chance.

KATHRYN
And go for OMS burn.

She hits the button and --

OUTSIDE THE SHIP

The ENGINES' FIRE fills the screen.

BACK TO:

THE FLIGHT DECK

Sweating, KATHRYN'S glued to the controls. KEVIN yells over the engine ROAR.

KEVIN
Engines 109%! How fast are we slowing down?

RUDY
Looks like 13.8.

TISH
What happens if we slow down too much?

KATHRYN
Don't ask...

CUT TO:

NASA CONTROL

Everyone's eyes are on the BIG BOARD. Moving across the map is a square demarking the RE-ENTRY WINDOW. And coming up on it -- the SHUTTLE...

DIRECTOR
Come on, whoever's driving that thing -- you can do it. You gotta do it....

CUT TO:

IN THE SHUTTLE

RUDY is calling the speed. Kevin looks at Kathryn and Kathryn looks at Kevin.

RUDY
4900....4850....4825....4800.

KATHRYN
Terminate OMS burn.
(she hits the switches)
All right. Okay.
(tries to think)
Now it's a 180 degree roll.
And go for roll.

KATHRYN wipes her sweaty palm, taking hold of the JOYSTICK. She pushes the STICK left and --

OUTSIDE THE SHUTTLE--

As the ship zooms past IT ROLLS OVER, flying completely upside-down...

INSIDE--

The kids are all watching Kathryn in admiration.

RUDY
Fly that thing....

KATHRYN
I'm...trying.... All right, standby for RCS burn, we have to bring this thing around for reentry. And go for RCS--

This time, instead of pushing the stick she twists it.

OUTSIDE THE SHIP

We see side jets open up, causing the ship to rotate.

INSIDE--

Kathryn twists back on the stick.

KATHRYN
I don't know if we came around enough!
(twists again)
They don't have this on planes...

She is trying to orient herself, looking at the instruments, then out the window.

KATHRYN
Oh, Jesus, wait a minute--
(twists other way on the stick)
Oh, no, please no!

KEVIN
What is it?!

KATHRYN
Look out the window!

He does, and he's horrified by the sight: The Earth is spinning around them! Or, to be more accurate, AS WE SEE:

FROM OUTSIDE--

THE SHIP IS TUMBLING, end around end, out of control.

INSIDE THE SHIP

The effects are immediately felt as Rudy finds himself pinned against an instrument panel.

RUDY
Get us out of it!

TISH
What's happening?!

IN MID-DECK

Andie knows immediately what's happening.

ANDIE
Tell her she has to pull out of the tumble, there are only a few seconds before the interface--

ON THE FLIGHT DECK

Kevin turns around.

KEVIN
What does she mean, interface?

KATHRYN
(working the stick feverishly)
Till the atmosphere, till we burn up! Oh, Kevin, I can't do it!

IT'S A NIGHTMARE SPIN. Everything that wasn't tied down is flying through the cabin. KATHRYN fights the centrifugal force, trying to keep her hands on the controls.

CUT TO:

NASA CONTROL

It's lunacy. Everyone's running back and forth.

DIRECTOR
They're re-entering out of control!

NASA #5
Ionization blackout in thirty seconds! Tracking's gonna lose them!

CUT TO:

OUTSIDE THE SHUTTLE

The SHIP'S TUMBLING in every direction, plummeting towards EARTH...

INSIDE THE SHIP

On the MID-DECK, MAX spins petrified; ANDIE pulls herself out of the bunk.

ON THE FLIGHT DECK

Kathryn is still fighting for control.

KATHRYN
You know I can't do this, I never could do this. Kevin--

KEVIN
Listen to me. Slow down. You're panicked--

KATHRYN
You're damn right I'm panicked!

KEVIN
Well stop being panicked!

KATHRYN
I can't!

ANDIE (V.O.)
Yes, you can!

KEVIN turns in surprise: ANDIE, in obvious pain, has pulled herself up to the flight deck.

ANDIE
Listen to me, Kathryn, your movements are way too big. Slow down, just use your wrist--

KATHRYN grits her teeth, forcing herself to do what ANDIE says.

ANDIE
That's right, keep it slow... Little movements...

TISH
Oh, no, look outside--

THROUGH THE WINDOW--

We can see the outer skin of the ship beginning to glow a dull red.

KATHRYN
There's no time, we're at the interface, there's no shielding on the top!

ANDIE
Forget the shielding, forget everything but that stick!
(enforced calm)
Listen to me, Kathryn, you have all the time that you need, this ship is not going to burn up--

Kathryn throws everything she has, both hands, her body, in one last attempt to stop the spin. And

OUTSIDE THE SHIP--

we see that she's beginning to get it. The tumble slows down.

ON THE FLIGHT DECK

Kevin is watching Kathryn.

KEVIN
Righteous. Unbelievably righteous...

THE SHIP STEADIES. The kids cheer as

OUTSIDE--

The underside of the Shuttle turns a ghastly orange.

INSIDE--

Kathryn puts her head down on the console, while everyone hugs her. RUDY turns to ANDIE.

RUDY
Did we really have time?

ANDIE
...About three more seconds.

CUT TO:

NASA CONTROL

Where everybody's watching the board. The light representing the shuttle disappears.

NASA #1
Ionization black-out. We won't see anything for a while now.

DIRECTOR
Did they stop spinning in time?

No one ventures a guess.

CUT TO:

OUTSIDE THE SHUTTLE

Seen from above, it falls away from us through the atmosphere -- like a burning red meteor...

INSIDE--

The GLOW. Hellish on the KIDS' FACES. No one can do anything now but watch as it seems to engulf them...

FROM ABOVE--

The SHUTTLE'S still plummeting, falling away from us till it's just a blazing red dot...

INSIDE--

The heat seems to bleed through the tiles, it's impossible to tell if the kids are burning or it's just the reflected glow...

When suddenly: WHOOSH!

It's gone. In a flash. No more red. Instead, out the window:

A VOID

Impenetrable, gray.

KEVIN, KATHRYN -- they don't know what's happening. And it's terrifying. Like purgatory. Like time standing still. Eerie, deathly and suddenly --

KATHRYN
Look!!!

The GRAY VOID breaks open, to reveal:

LAND!

City lights, coastline -- far below. The gray void was simply CLOUDS, good old, Earthbound clouds...

OUTSIDE--

The Shuttle breaks out of the cloud cover into the EARLY MORNING LIGHT, gliding past us in a triumphant streak--

CUT TO:

NASA CONTROL

The place is nuts, EVERYONE on his feet CHEERING.

CUT TO:

INSIDE THE SHUTTLE

Huge grins on their faces, the KIDS are flying the ship like a bunch of professionals. Cocky professionals.

KATHRYN
Commander, set flap angle for landing, please.

KEVIN
My pleasure, Pilot, if you'd just give me a slight hint--

She leans over, smiling, and hits the switches herself.

KATHRYN
Flap angle set. Speed brake at 100%, Commander...

The CRACKLY VOICE of NASA starts coming over their headsets.

DIRECTOR (V.O.)
...Atlantis?! Are you back in range?! Do you copy?!

KEVIN
Roger that, Control.

They can hear the CHEERING down at NASA.

KEVIN
What's all that ruckus about?

NASA #1
Just a few people glad you're coming home.

KEVIN
Well tell 'em to get serious down there. What do you think this is --
(beat)
Space Camp?

Kathryn looks at Kevin and takes his hand; it becomes more a victory clasp -- to which Rudy, and then Tish, join in.

IN MID-DECK

Max gets on the headset.

MAX
Is...Jinx down there?

IN NASA CONTROL

The DIRECTOR turns around and looks at Jinx.

DIRECTOR
Yeah, Jinx is here.

IN THE SHUTTLE

MAX looks at ANDIE.

MAX
Well, don't do anything bad to him, okay? It was my fault.

DIRECTOR (V.O.)
Actually, he offered to let us execute him-- I believe those were the words he used...
(Max is smiling)
But we declined.

Andie is smiling as well.

CUT TO:

THE SKY - MORNING

As the Shuttle flies majestically. Two T-38 escort JETS join it, flanking the ship on either side...

CUT TO:

EXT. SKY - DAWN

Set against the magic of the dark-blue sky, the SHUTTLE is a SILVER LIGHT streaking across the disappearing stars... WE PULL BACK TO SEE we're watching it with --

A LITTLE BOY in pajamas, sitting on top a suburban GARAGE ROOF. From O.S. --

WOMAN (O.S.)
C'mon, Peter, it's on T.V..

He ignores her, staring up at the SILVER LIGHT... MESMERIZED. AWESTRUCK. And suddenly --

FLASH.
It blinks. Just once. The BOY'S jaw drops.

BOY
It winked at me...

He jumps to his feet. THERE'S ONLY ONE RESPONSE --

BOY (CONT.)
I'm goin' up!

And as WE PULL BACK to silhouette the BOY ON HIS ROOF against the beckoning, brightening sky we --

CUT TO:

NORTHRUP STRIP, WHITE SANDS, NM - DAWN

As the T-38 jets guide the shuttle down to the desert floor. The landing gear come down.... WE HEAR the last few feet called off by MISSION CONTROL, then:

TOUCH-DOWN. The SHUTTLE hits the runway in a triumphant textbook landing...

NEARBY--

A HELICOPTER is landing, ZACH is jumping out almost before it's down. He runs toward the STOPPED SHUTTLE, as

EMERGENCY VEHICLES
converge on the scene. Blowers are set up, hoses attached. Finally:

THE HATCH ON THE SIDE OPENS--

KEVIN is standing there, a huge grin on his face.

KEVIN
What, no TV cameras...?

ZACH bounds up the portable steps, reaching the hatch just as ANDIE appears, helped by RUDY. ZACH takes her gently in his arms and kisses her.

Next to them, KEVIN is beckoning to KATHRYN and gesturing for her to go down the steps first.

KEVIN
After you, Pilot.

As the emergency CREWS CHEER, KATHRYN smiles, takes KEVIN'S hand in hers -- and walks together with him down the steps.

THE END